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TO

MY MOTHER

These Plays are altogether various. If you like one please do not read the others.

THE AUTHOR.

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HIS SECOND GIRL

A Comedy in One Act

Taking Place in an Ohio Valley City Sometime Before the Civil War

THE PERSONS ARE:

Mr. Randolph Dexter, *a bachelor recently come of age and wealthy.*
Mr. Mark Forrell, *his friend and guest.*
Mr. Blaisdell Throckmorton, *his guest.*
Miss Beatrice Cameron, *his cousin, who masquerades as his maid.*
Mrs. Dangerfield, *the mother of his fiancée.*
Miss Julia Dangerfield, *his fiancée.*

[*The action takes place in the sitting-room of young Mr. Dexter's residence. It is a large, beautiful old-fashioned room of that gracious time in the last century before good taste was strangled in the virtuous period following the Civil War. The tables, chairs, sofas, secretary, are all perfect old mahogany, there are brocaded hangings in rich colors, and family portraits in oils of grim old gentlemen in frilled shirts and of lovely stiff ladies hang on the walls. For the benefit of those who may not be lucky enough to see the play, I will say that Mr. Randolph Dexter is a little above*

medium height, with square shoulders, trim and strong, fair, with green-blue eyes, very dark brown hair which he wears down to his collar to be in the mode and a lock of which continually straggles down the center of his forehead, particularly when he is upset, as he generally is. He wears a dark blue broadcloth coat, somewhat high-shouldered and tight-waisted, a yellow satin waistcoat, and very full white trousers, a loosely flowing tie and huge watch-fob. His friend, Mr. Mark Forrell, is a small, slight young man, pale, with hazel eyes and brown hair, and immaculately and unostentatiously clad in black with light grey trousers. Mr. Blaisdell Throckmorton is very tall, very slender, and very fair with blue eyes and yellow hair, and a costume that would make any tailor feel that he had not lived in vain. It includes large checkered trousers, a plum-colored coat and blue brocaded waistcoat, with all the accessories of fobs, snowy shirt, curled locks, etc. Mrs. Dangerfield is very tall, very fat, very dark, in a rich purple silk dress with flounces from the bottom to the waist over voluminous hoopskirts, a black lace mantilla round her shoulders, a dressy bonnet with large strings tied under her chin, gold chains, cameo brooches, bracelets an inch wide, an imperious temper. Miss Julia Dangerfield is tall, dark, a handsome girl, waiting the husband and settlement that will develop her into her mother's proportions; she wears a gold-colored silk — also full hoop-skirts — very low at the top, showing all of her beautiful neck and shoulders,

also she wears a flat hat with white plumes sloping backward and ribbons tied under her chin. Miss Beatrice Cameron is perhaps a trifle below medium height, slender and graceful but strongly built, fair, with ravishing blue eyes — eyes that are called hypnotic and are said to belong to Aquarius people — and brown hair with a glint of gold in it; she has on a very simple little blue silk gown without hoops.

It is late afternoon, about six o'clock, of a day in spring. The windows are open and the scent of blossoms enters. No one is in the room.]

RANDOLPH [*entering, followed by Mark. His face is rather cloudy and he speaks with some irascibility*]. Well, what do you want with me?

MARK. Why, Ranny, dear boy, you know this can't go on.

RANDOLPH. What can't go on?

MARK. Oh, dear boy, you know what I mean.

RANDOLPH. Confound it, be definite! You call me out here away from the fellows, my supper-party, where I'm supposed to be host, and then you philander.

MARK. Well, dear boy, it's a little hard to approach you on such a subject. I — Oh, Ranny, dear boy, you oughtn't to do this way!

RANDOLPH. What way?

MARK. The way you're doing.

RANDOLPH [*turning on him abruptly*]. Look here, Mark, I don't take criticism kindly. I wouldn't stand it at all from anybody but you.

MARK. It doesn't seem as if you were stand-

ing it very well from me. After all we've been to each other I hardly thought you'd misunderstand me; that you'd misinterpret my motives.

RANDOLPH. Oh, hang your motives! What do you want?

MARK. Well, you're engaged to be married, aren't you?

RANDOLPH [*very sullenly and frowning*]. I am.

MARK. You expect to be married next week?

RANDOLPH. Of course. Look here, Mark, what's the matter with you? You know I'm not the sort of man to go back on my word?

MARK. Go back on your word? Why should you? You're going to marry Julia Dangerfield and she's a splendid girl, handsome, high-spirited and rich. There are half a dozen fellows envying you.

RANDOLPH [*smiling on one side of his mouth*]. I wonder why her mother didn't pick out one of them?

MARK. But her mother is a general — you know that — she's a general. She won't bear any carryings-on. And society won't either.

RANDOLPH. Carryings-on! I'm a gentleman, Mark, and I don't like insinuations even from you. What do you mean?

MARK. I mean this girl. You know what's been going on in there — all the fellows casting moon-eyes at her. You know what's been going on ever since she came to you. You must know all the fellows are smitten. She's too outrageously pretty and attractive. Why do you have a housemaid like that?

RANDOLPH. I didn't make her.

MARK. No, apparently God did that. It took a master hand. But you accepted her with alacrity. You engaged her. Why did you?

RANDOLPH. Probably because she didn't go to you first.

MARK. Oh!

RANDOLPH [*loudly*]. Don't be so confounded superior. You would have done just exactly what I did.

MARK. Hush! Don't talk so loud. The boys will hear you.

RANDOLPH. No, they won't. They're the length of the double parlors away.

MARK. But you took her in without knowing a thing about her.

RANDOLPH. How could I? She was just over from England. She couldn't give any references, poor little thing.

MARK. You took her in when you didn't really need a girl at all.

RANDOLPH. Perhaps I didn't. But she needed a place.

MARK. She could easily have gotten work anywhere.

RANDOLPH. Like enough. And perhaps it is lucky she happened to come to me and is living now in a respectable home where she has a protector.

MARK. Oh, pshaw! Are you going to protect all the stray servant girls in the world?

RANDOLPH. Look here, Mark, I don't like you to speak that way of her. She's just as refined in

her speech and manners and *soul* as any lady I ever knew.

MARK. But the point is all that is superfluous in a maid and a maid is quite superfluous in your establishment. You've got plenty of servants. You have a housekeeper and how many others?

RANDOLPH. I have a housekeeper and mammy cooks and there is a coachman and his wife and a butler.

MARK. That would seem to be enough for the simple household of a young bachelor. You oughtn't to have a *girl.* She is, to say the least, unnecessary.

RANDOLPH. Look here, Mark, I don't want to seem to be excusing myself or shirking responsibility or anything, but the truth is she just dropped in one day as if from heaven —

MARK [*groaning*]. Oh, Lord!

RANDOLPH. — and said she heard I wanted a maid. I don't know where on earth she heard it for I hadn't dreamed of it myself, but she seemed so sure of it and — well, you couldn't tell her you didn't want her, you couldn't tell her that when she had her blue eyes fixed on you, nobody could disappoint her that way. She said she had no home or any place to go. And — well, in ten minutes she had everything settled and had taken off her bonnet and brought in her bag and was dusting the parlor ornaments.

MARK. Oh, Lord! But you're soft.

RANDOLPH [*scathingly*]. I said it took her *ten* minutes with me. I should judge it would have taken *five* with you.

[*Just then Sally, the maid, enters. She is*

graceful and quiet and is about to glide through the room when the two young men turn quickly, see her behind them and stand looking at her, their backs to the audience.]

SALLY. Oh, pardon me. I didn't mean to intrude.

RANDOLPH [*solicitously*]. Is there anything you want? Anything I can do for you?

SALLY. Oh, no, sir. I was just going through to open all the library windows to let the thick tobacco smoke go out.

RANDOLPH. That's a splendid idea.

SALLY. Oh, thank you, sir. [*She goes.*]

MARK. Speaking of angels!

RANDOLPH [*earnestly*]. She *is,* Mark, upon my soul, she *is!*

MARK. Oh, yes, there is no doubt about it but that is exactly the trouble. You've no business whatever to have an angel. And above all, you've no business to have an angel wait the table tonight.

RANDOLPH [*thrusting his hands into his pockets and shrugging his shoulders*]. She wanted to.

MARK. I dare say. But you know all the boys are cracked about her and have acted outrageously ever since she came. For the last ten days they have all been hanging round your house half the time just for a chance word with your maid.

RANDOLPH. You've been here a few times yourself.

MARK. They'll all get drunk tonight and heaven knows what will happen.

RANDOLPH. They will *not* get drunk.

MARK. They will. It's your farewell supper to your bachelor friends and you've got cham-

pagne. Blaisdell Throckmorton always gets drunk if he hasn't more than a dose of quinine and whiskey to do it on.

RANDOLPH. I'm not going to stay here to quarrel with you. Heaven knows I've got enough on my mind. [*Feelingly.*]

MARK. Oh, well, go back, then. Only, *please* think over what I have said and for heaven's sake *do* something about it if you can. I'll be with you in a moment. I want a breath of fresh air. [*Goes to the door and opens it.*] That tobacco smoke in there!

RANDOLPH. Too bad you don't smoke yourself, then you wouldn't notice.

[*He goes out to the right through the double parlors to his supper party. Mark stands in the door looking out. In a moment Sally returns.*]

MARK. Oh! — Ah! Miss —

SALLY. Just plain Sally, sir, at your service, sir.

MARK. But you're not plain at all, Sally.

SALLY. That's such an old joke, sir, isn't it, sir? One can always use it safely, can't one, sir? [*She passes on quickly.*]

MARK. Won't you stop a moment? I — I — I wanted to speak to you about something.

SALLY. I may be needed in there to wait.

MARK. Maybe you need to wait here a moment. [*She smiles at his play on words.*] You know I'd feel so much more comfortable to call you Miss Sally.

SALLY [*in alarm*]. Oh, please don't, sir. Oh, please don't, really.

MARK. You're so very modest for so pretty a girl.

SALLY. Did you want me for anything, sir?

MARK. Why, yes,— er — I — er. You know Dexter is very easily managed — up to a certain point — by the right person — isn't he?

SALLY. What do you mean, Mr. Mark?

MARK. I mean — er — *won't* you let me address you as Miss Sally? It would make it so much easier to explain.

SALLY [*quite in a panic of alarm*]. No, I can't, really, Mr. Mark. Oh, no, it would never do.

MARK. I always think of you in that way. You are — you are so beautiful and genteel — it is — it is almost unseemly and dangerous for you to be — to act the part of a servant in the establishment of a young bachelor. It — er — there is such a thing as scandal, you know. [*He finally blurts it out, looking very red and embarrassed.*]

SALLY. Oh, dear me, the very idea!

MARK [*very solemnly*]. I am afraid people are talking now. Dexter wouldn't tell you. He is so chivalrous. And he wouldn't ask you to take another place. But I thought perhaps — you could manage him if you wished — that you could just go quietly away.

SALLY. Oh, Mr. Mark, you wouldn't turn me out?

MARK. Oh, no, no, no, pray don't call it that.

SALLY. But it *is* that. [*Her voice trembles and she is on the verge of tears.*]

MARK [*very much perturbed*]. Oh, please don't weep!

SALLY. Then don't turn me out.

MARK. I'm not. I — I was just advising you to go while there is yet time. You know he is engaged. You haven't seen his future mother-in-law yet.

SALLY. No, sir. Is she very lovely?

MARK. Mrs. Dangerfield lovely? My God!

SALLY. I meant Miss Dangerfield.

MARK. Oh, yes, very. Mrs. Dangerfield took her daughter on to New York to buy the wedding frock and other things two weeks ago just before you came. They returned this morning — I don't suppose the ladies are unpacked yet. I don't think Mrs. Dangerfield knows about your being here. When she does —

[*Steps are heard outside, there is a rustling of silks and hoopskirts and Mrs. Dangerfield appears at the door. She enters and stretches out her hand to Mark. For so large a woman she has a mincing manner.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Ah, Mark, you dear fellow, how are you?

MARK. Oh, good evening, Mrs. Dangerfield.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. I just dropped in to see how the party is going on. Everything beautiful? Are the oysters good? And you're drinking Judge Dexter's old wine, I'll be bound! But why aren't you at the table. [*Turning, she sees Sally.*] Who is this?

MARK [*hurriedly*]. She is just a maid Ranny got to help serve tonight.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. To serve? Nonsense. He has plenty of help. Her costume, Mark, is, to say the least, odd — odd, in a maid — strange, unbecoming.

MARK [*nervously and hurriedly*]. Oh, it seems to me quite becoming.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*scathingly*]. Perhaps it does to you!

MARK. And very simple, very simple.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Simplicity, Mark, is often a trap. [*To Sally, whom she examines critically through her lorgnette.*] Where did you come from?

SALLY [*with a curtsey*]. I am an English maid, madame.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. English maid, indeed! How long have you been here?

SALLY. I have been with Mr. Dexter two weeks.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*with a scream*]. Two weeks! And *I* never knew anything of this.

MARK. Oh, dear lady, you were away, so you didn't happen to know it, naturally.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Don't "dear lady" me, Mark. You told me she was here only to serve this evening and now I find she has been here two weeks. I shall go right in and speak to Randolph.

MARK [*stepping in front of her as she starts and blocking the way*]. Surely you wouldn't do that. Think a moment, Mrs. Dangerfield. Ranny mightn't like it.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Under such circumstances am I called upon to care *what* Randolph likes?

MARK [*laying his hand on her arm*]. But think of the consequences — the far-spreading consequences. You would bring ridicule on

Ranny and the boys would all tell the story far and wide.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*stopping*]. Very well, then, bring him out to me at once.

[*Mark goes, glancing back with a worried look at Sally. She is about to slide out in the other direction but Mrs. Dangerfield detains her.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Stop *here!* [*Sally stops but gives Mrs. Dangerfield as sinister a glance as is possible from her lovely eyes.*] You say you are a foreigner?

SALLY. Oh, oui, madame.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Ah, French, one might have known! Lie number one. You said you were English.

SALLY. Oh, yes, madame, but I have served in France.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Well, I will say you don't look French — with their dirty black complexions. But I should hesitate to say what you look. If you are English why did you come to this country? Couldn't you find enough *victims* there?

SALLY. Oh, I came to get work, madame.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Work indeed! You look as if you had worked. Humph! Where did you know Mr. Dexter?

SALLY [*her eyes growing large and brilliant, her face flushing*]. Madame, I refuse to be questioned by you.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. It makes little difference. If you answered my questions I could ex-

pect nothing but lies. Girls of your class never tell the truth.

RANDOLPH [*entering, followed by Mark. He speaks with a sweepingly polite manner*]. Mrs. Dangerfield! To what do I owe the honor of this visit?

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Randolph, I only dropped in to see how the party was going on.

RANDOLPH. Surely you would have too much consideration to interrupt it.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. I had no intention of interrupting it, of course, Randolph. I came rather to assist you, to do anything I could for you.

RANDOLPH. But at a gentleman's supper party.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. My thought was as it always is, to do for you, to assist you, to be a mother to you —

RANDOLPH. — But at a gentleman's champagne supper? A mother seems a trifle superfluous.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. A mother should be welcome anywhere — in a palace or in the gutter! And I came here, Randolph, and discover this — this *hussy!*

[*Waving her hand majestically toward little Sally who has edged off towards the door. Ranny starts violently.*]

MARK. Oh, Mrs. Dangerfield, don't say that!

RANDOLPH [*striding over to Sally and taking her by the arm*]. I will not have you listen to her. Will you go for a moment and let me explain? [*He opens the door for her most deferentially and she goes out.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Randolph, this is absurd, this is comical, this is beyond belief. You treat this servant as if she were the Queen of Sheba. It is shocking. You must dismiss her at once.

RANDOLPH. Mrs. Dangerfield, there is nothing shocking about it. And you know, really, you are insulting me.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Randolph, you are insulting all of us.

RANDOLPH. I?

MARK [*approaching her*]. It is all so perfectly simple, dear lady, so perfectly simple. This is just a maid in Ranny's large establishment — you know he needs so many. And now don't you think it would on the whole be much better for you to go?

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Don't " dear lady " me again, Mark, and it isn't perfectly simple at all — far from it. If it was, why should you want me to go? You are just taking Randolph's part, standing together, as men do.

MARK. Dear me, no, I do assure you. But the boys are all in there, they will get wind of this and it will be all over town by tomorrow. And the scandal — think of it!

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Oh, we must try to keep it quiet — we must try not to let it get noised abroad. But, Randolph, mercy! What if your cousin should happen to arrive and discover the situation? [*To Mark.*] He is expecting any moment his cousin, a very rich and fashionable young lady who has been residing abroad. What would *she* think of our manners and morals.

How would she accept the situation? She would not accept it at *all.* Randolph, you must dismiss this creature instantly.

RANDOLPH [*drawing himself up in angry amazement*]. Dismiss her? — I —

MARK [*breaking in*]. Of course he will, dear lady, certainly, without doubt he will dismiss her — that is the very thing for him to do, but not just this instant. The supper must go on — any one can see that — for appearance' sake. She must wait the table just as usual and nobody must be allowed to suspect. In the morning it will all be arranged. We must avoid a scene tonight. Now let me see you to the gate, dear lady. [*He leans over her and offers her his arm.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. No, we must not have a scene.— If she's going to act up. We must try to keep up appearances. But it will have to be done.

MARK [*officiously*]. Oh, yes, of course, you are quite right to try to avoid a scene and scandal. In the morning it will all be attended to, I assure you.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*rising and taking his arm*]. Or perhaps later tonight. I can depend upon you, Randolph?

MARK. Of course you can. I'll see that he does it, dear lady.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*as they go out*]. Don't "dear lady" me, Mark, after fibbing to me the way you did. I can't account for it — for your fibbing to me. I don't like young men to fib. [*They go.*]

RANDOLPH [*strides over to the other door,*

left, through which Sally has gone, opens it and calls]. Sally!

[*She comes in instantly as if she had been standing there waiting. They look at each other, she flushed and troubled, yet with a gleam of the madcap left that might break into a smile any moment, he flushed, angry, embarrassed, glowering.*]

SALLY. Thank you, sir, don't you think you ought to go back to your party now?

RANDOLPH [*with deep feeling*]. What has just taken place — I wouldn't have had it happen for the whole world. I would rather cut my hand off than have you hear that woman's insult.

SALLY. Oh, sir, really, don't you think you'd better go back to your supper party?

RANDOLPH. The supper party go hang! There is only one thing in the world I care about — God knows it may be wrong but I can't help it and God knows I don't want to help it. It is the sweetest thing that ever came into my life.

SALLY. Oh, sir, really you don't need a maid at all, you know, and don't you think I'd better go?

RANDOLPH. Go? Aren't you happy here?

SALLY. I haven't been so happy since before my — you see, sir, I had a great loss before I came to this country — the death of my father — and I never expected to be happy again though he said I would be. He said I was a love-child and would never be sad long. And you, sir, from the time I first saw you, you have been so good to me, you have given me joy.

RANDOLPH. I am deeply sorry to hear of your grief. You have all my sympathy. I may have

been bad-tempered sometimes — I didn't know you were in trouble. Why didn't you tell me?

SALLY. I don't like to make people sad. My father never did. But you, sir, are you happy?

RANDOLPH [*intensely*]. I didn't know it was possible to be so happy as I have been these last two weeks.

SALLY. It was a beautiful time, sir. You know the English think there is nothing like an English spring, but your spring is lovelier because it is more awkward, shy and thin and exquisite. The birds follow each other and the flowers follow each other like a procession. And today has been the crowning day of all. After the shower this morning I never saw the grass so green, or heard the birds sing so, or felt the air so fresh and caressing. And all day and now the scent of roses and honeysuckle is everywhere. [*She stops and sniffs the air, her eyes upturned.*] And a robin out there — have you heard him? — he has been singing his dear twilight song over and over and over. It is as if something beautiful were happening.

RANDOLPH. Sally, it is you that has happened.

SALLY. Oh, then, sir, are you going to marry her?

RANDOLPH [*starting and looking at her amazedly*]. I am a gentleman, a man of honor, a man of my word.

SALLY. Oh, then, sir, don't you think something, *something* is bound to happen?

[*He gazes at her in the most surprised, wondering way and just then Mark comes in.*]

MARK [*with a deep sigh*]. To the gate! So

far so good. Now what about this cousin, Ranny? Is *she* likely to drop on our heads this evening?

RANDOLPH. Oh, yes, old chap. I meant to tell you. You've been such a trump to me, helping me out. One good turn deserves another. This cousin is imminent. [*Sally gives a slight start and watches him.*] Her name's Beatrice Cameron, she's a cousin on my mother's side, her father and my mother were cousins. He was a sort of invalid and so they traveled a great part of the time for his health. She's lived most of her life in Europe. I've never seen her. He died a while ago and left her alone in the world, and I, being nearest of kin, he made me her guardian till she is twenty-one. She's nineteen now. She expected to come over here, but I had a letter from her about a month ago saying she was about to start and I haven't heard from her since. I'm worried about that in addition to everything else. She's said to be a madcap, full of pranks, and I don't know what may have happened. I haven't heard from the barrister who has charge of her affairs over there, either. Mark, if she should arrive and I happened to be away or anything, I want you please to look after her. Mrs. Dangerfield is planning to — but — well, you know ladies sometimes don't agree. I don't know that my little cousin would take to her.

SALLY. I should think it highly probable she wouldn't.

MARK. That's all right, Ranny, for heaven's sake go back to your guests. I'll take care of the little cousin. [*He happens to turn and look at*

Sally as he says this and she gives a queer little start and smile.]

SALLY. Oh, yes, sir, please go.

[*Randolph goes through the door at the left back to the party.*]

MARK. That's good.

SALLY. Won't you go back, too, sir?

MARK. I will in a moment. As soon as I make sure she isn't coming back.

SALLY. I must get a fresh pitcher of water.

[*She goes out through the right door. Mark walks to the outside door, listens a few moments, looking out, then closes the door and slides the bolt across it. As he turns about Blaisdell Throckmorton enters from the left door.*]

BLAISDELL [*very jovially*]. How do you do, Mark?

MARK [*shortly*]. Well, thank you.

BLAISDELL. What are you doin', lockin' doors for, Mark?

MARK. To keep devils out.

BLAISDELL. *Thought* I heard voices in here a while ago. Funny party. Host away from the table half the time — and you look like the head undertaker. Plenty of bubblin' liquid flowin', too. Say, Mark, have you seen anything of a pretty girl round here?

MARK. Oh, shut your head and go back to the table.

BLAISDELL. I ain't a-goin' to shut my head for you and I ain't a-goin back till I get ready. Why don't you go back yourself? Whose grandfather are you, anyhow?

MARK. Don't make more of an ass of yourself than you can help, Blais. You're drunk.

BLAISDELL. Don't you say that again to me or I'll knock you down, you little faded-out toadstool. I ain't drunk and what's more I ain't goin' to be. I haven't touched a drop. Sheer waste of good liquor, too. There's all that champagne just settin' quietly in bottles when it might be dancin' in my head. But she don't like men to drink and therefore I shall never touch the accursed fluid again. [*Very grandiloquently.*]

MARK. You've lost your heart again, have you?

BLAISDELL. I've lost my heart again and for the last time. She may not be my equal in the eyes of society but I'll wager all I've got against any man's dirty money that she's pure gold, that she's as fine metal as any lady in the country.

MARK [*turning on him suddenly*]. Whom are you talking about?

BLAISDELL. This little maid that's workin' here. I'm goin' to marry her.

MARK. You infernal ass. You don't know what you're talking about. Go on back to the table and try to behave yourself decently like a gentleman.

BLAISDELL. Go on back to the table yourself. Seems to me you've absented yourself more than I have. Everybody knows what you're up to, though, that you're out here after the little charmer. And I want to inform you that if you call me an ass again I'll *ass-sassinate* you. I don't know what's got into you. You used to talk and act like a gentleman.

MARK. For the Lord's sake, go on back and don't make any more trouble about this — this girl. There's enough trouble already.

BLAISDELL. I ain't a-goin' to make any trouble, I'm a-goin' to stop all the trouble — I'm a-goin' to marry her. I'll tell you what, Mark, as between man and man, I never wanted to get married before but she can have me. I'm goin' to take her to my bosom and protect her so as all you fools will have to let her alone. You'd all carry on with her but there ain't one of you would marry her. But I would. She may be of lowly, humble origin but I'm a-goin' to raise her to my estate. [*Triumphantly.*] She shall keep only a pitcher of water on my grandfather's sideboard and stir nothing but tea with my grandmother's silver spoons.

[*Sally enters with a pitcher of water and is hurrying through, but Blaisdell tries to stop her.*]

BLAISDELL. Hold on there! Won't you stop a minute? I want to talk to you. I've got something I want to tell you.

SALLY. No, I can't, really, I must hasten.

[*She goes on through and Blaisdell after a moment of looking sheepish with dropped jaw follows.*]

BLAISDELL. I'll follow the pure and unsullied water pitcher.

[*Mark is left alone, looking after Blaisdell and frowning. He bites his fingers and seems nervous and much perturbed. He brings his right fist down into his left palm hard. Then he puts his hands into his pockets and stands*

anxiously waiting. In a minute or two Sally returns flushed and excited. Mark hurriedly pulls his hands out of his pockets. She is about to pass on through but he nervously detains her.]

MARK. Please wait a moment, Miss Sally, please!

SALLY [*turning to him with her quick, lovely smile*]. Plain Sally, sir.

MARK. Please let me call you that, please! You're not at all plain and you're Miss to me — you're a princess — and nothing's plain — [*with an effort to smile*] — things are getting worse and worse tangled.

SALLY. Is there anything new, sir? Is it very awful?

MARK. New? Awful? Oh, dear me, yes. I don't see any way out of it but — Miss Sally, will you be my wife?

SALLY [*with a little scream of surprise*]. Oh, *mon dieu!*

MARK [*very nervous and twitchy*]. Say you will at once and everything will be all right. I —

SALLY. Oh, Mr. Mark, you are just doing this out of pity! You are so generous! You would sacrifice yourself! I couldn't think of letting you.

MARK [*huskily*]. I adore you!

SALLY. Oh, don't think of such a thing. Do go and eat your supper. You haven't had a bite. You must be famished. Why, they've got to the quail and you haven't even had an oyster.

MARK. I don't want anything to eat.

SALLY. Oh, yes, you do. Every gentleman

does. After you've had some supper you won't think about doing such morbidly unselfish deeds. Please? [*She stands enticingly before him, motioning him back to the supper party and begging him.*]

MARK. Oh, Miss Sally, if you only knew how I feel!

SALLY. You'll feel better when you've had a dish of soup. [*Taking him by the arm.*]

MARK. I don't want any soup —

SALLY. Don't you like soup? I don't blame you — I don't like it myself. But some fresh celery and radishes will give an appetite for the birds.

MARK. I don't want any food. I —

SALLY. You've just gone beyond your hungry time, but after you've had a bite or two you will be all right.

MARK. Oh, my dear, I want —

SALLY. It isn't so much what you want as what you ought to have. Do come along, sir.

MARK. Oh, my — my dearest —

SALLY [*dropping his arm and shoving him through the door on the right*]. You need lettuce and radishes and mashed potatoes and asparagus on toast.

[*She pushes him through and comes back and drops into a chair. She hardly knows whether to laugh or cry and putting her hands to her face dashes her fingers over her eyes as if to scatter away the cobwebs. Almost at once Blaisdell appears.*]

BLAISDELL. Oh, Lordy, at last! You know I've been tryin' all evenin' to get a word with you

but you're such a butterfly, lightin' now here, now there. And you're so busy, too. A busy butterfly — ha — ha! But a butterfly has got no business to be busy — it ought to be just pretty. Have you observed that I haven't touched a drop this evenin'? Not one single swallow has passed my lips nor never will again.

SALLY. Oh, I am so glad.

BLAISDELL. Not one drop of the beady liquid. It's all bein' wasted on the other fellows. But you don't want me to, so I won't. See what an influence you have over a man. Or, that is to say, over me. I wouldn't say you could do it with any man but you certainly can do just as you want with me. You can twist me round your little finger. I'm your abject slave.

SALLY. Oh, Mr. Throckmorton, don't talk so foolishly.

BLAISDELL. I ain't talkin' foolishly, that's just it — I mean it. I mean every word I say. I'm a man of my word. You know, honest, most men ain't. A man'll promise a girl to swear off and never drink another drop and all the while he don't even intend to try. And men promise in the marriage service to love their wives always and ninety percent of 'em stop in the first year. The rest stop, too, but pretend not to — lots of good that does a woman — lots of fun she gets out of that. But I ain't that kind. I'm faithful and romantic.

SALLY. That will be a great comfort for your bride to know, I'm sure.

BLAISDELL. I feel as if you ought to know it and something else, too. I've got as blue blood

as anybody, I can hold up my head with the best. My wife will have all the old family furniture and silver and linen as well as all the new things she wants. My folks are aristocratic old Virginia stock and I'm proud but it ain't false pride, none of that darned foolishness, I ain't a snob. I'd marry a girl no matter how humble her origin if I loved her and she was a lady at heart.

SALLY. All this is most interesting, Mr. Throckmorton, but I haven't time to stop to listen, I must go see if the strawberries are ready.

BLAISDELL. Don't call me mister, my dear, call me Blaisy. You know what I mean by what I'm sayin', don't you? All the other fellows have been foolin' with you and it makes me mad as a hornet. Be my wife, my dear, straight away and we'll snap our fingers at 'em.

SALLY. Oh, Mr. Throckmorton, I must go.

BLAISDELL [*catching her hand*]. Not until you say the word.

SALLY. I'll never say it.

BLAISDELL. You think I'm too high up for you. My dear girl, it don't make any difference to me, I do assure you. And when you're my wife I'd never refer to your workin' out. I don't feel in the least as if I was stoopin' to you, I do assure you.

SALLY. Oh, it is utterly impossible! I couldn't marry you — I couldn't really — if I were queen of France.

BLAISDELL [*his manner changing from condescension to entreaty*]. You ain't a-goin' to give me the mitten?

SALLY. It is utterly impossible! Quite!

BLAISDELL [*dropping on his knees*]. Please, my darlin', please marry me!

SALLY. Get up at once. Some one may come.

BLAISDELL. Please have me!

SALLY. It is impossible, utterly. Get up! [*She tries to pull away from him. He sprawls on the floor, still holding her hand, then gets to his feet and catches her.*]

BLAISDELL. Please be my wife, please marry me! Give me a kiss! [*He throws his arms about her and tries to kiss her, she fights him and screams loudly, there is pounding on the outside door, and in a moment Ranny appears followed by Mark.*]

RANDOLPH [*fiercely angry, he runs at Blaisdell and strikes him*]. You damned rascal!

[*The pounding at the door continues with cries from the outside. Ranny punishes Blaisdell who releases Sally and rubs his jaw which bears the mark of Randolph's fist, Randolph puts his arm round Sally and she, half crying, clings to him.*]

RANDOLPH. You hound!

BLAISDELL [*rubbing his jaw*]. I ain't a hound.

[*The pounding continues, Mark unbolts the door and in all the confusion Mrs. Dangerfield enters majestically, followed by Julia. Mrs. Dangerfield sees Randolph with his arm round Sally, throws up her hands and her eyes and shrieks. Sally tries to slide away from Randolph but he holds her tightly and looks blackly at Mrs. Dangerfield.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Oh, mercy, oh, mercy,

mercy, mercy! What shame, what infamy, what disgrace!

MARK. Dear lady, why did you come back tonight?

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Why, in truth, did I? It is well I came. It is high time for me to come. Julia, you know what we have heard? Now you can see for yourself.

JULIA [*haughtily*]. I can, indeed!

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Oh, it is shameful, disgraceful, scandalous! Why did I come back, Mark? Because I had no sooner got home than some of the neighbors came in and told me about the goings-on here in my absence. How Randolph had taken in this — this — creature! How all of you young fellows had been caught by her pretty (?) face — paint, I'll be bound — and have been fairly living here, coming ostensibly to see Randolph but really to flirt with her, have been here morning, noon, and night. Oh, I guessed it all myself and could have told them more than they told me. I knew you had all planned this supper to be a regular orgy! Oh, you [*suddenly turning on Blaisdell*] you, Blaisdell Throckmorton, what are you doing standing there listening to all of this? You get right out of here at once!

BLAISDELL [*timorous but pig-headed*]. I ain't a-goin' to get out. I'm goin' to stay. I'll protect the young lady. I'm a-goin' to marry her.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Marry? Fudge! You none of you think of marrying. You all of you stand about like bumps on logs, like monkeys, like stones, when you ought to be on your bended knees

apologizing for the outrageous affront you have offered my daughter. Julia, have you nothing to say for yourself?

JULIA. I have, ma, if you would ever give me a chance to speak.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. It is your right and your duty to declare your reasons and intentions.

JULIA [*haughtily and majestically*]. What I have to say can be put most briefly though my heart is surcharged with indignation and grief. It is fortunate I have an audience who can be my witnesses. After your falsity, Randolph, you can not expect me to become your wife, and I therefore give back to you the ring which now is a mere token of your broken word. [*She very loftily and ostentatiously removes her engagement ring and hands it to Randolph, while Mrs. Dangerfield bursts into tears.*]

RANDOLPH [*with glowering eyes and deep disgust*]. I don't want the thing. [*He doesn't take it so that it drops on the floor and Blaisdell stoops and picks it up.*]

JULIA [*her voice beginning to tremble*]. You don't even apologize or beg my pardon or even try to explain!

RANDOLPH. You never gave me a chance and I wouldn't now. You have thought the worst you could think and now you can think anything you like.

JULIA. Oh, who would have guessed the baseness of man? You are treating me brutally! [*She bursts into tears.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*through her sobs*]. Oh, what would your dear *cousin* say to such a scene!

What would that aristocratic, wealthy, high-bred young lady say to such goings-on? Oh, dear me!

SALLY [*who has been trying vainly to release herself from Randolph, now pulls away and makes herself heard*]. It is I who must explain. I ought to have explained in the beginning. It is all my fault.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. It surely is.

SALLY. But I meant no harm.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Oh!

SALLY. I hadn't an idea — I hadn't really. I am Ranny's cousin — I am Beatrice Cameron.

[*There is general consternation. Mrs. Dangerfield and her daughter forget their tears. All the company speak in one breath.*]

MARK. Oh!

BLAISDELL. Good Lord!

JULIA. Oh, my gracious!

MRS. DANGERFIELD. A likely story!

SALLY. Oh, I can easily prove it by my packing-case and my visiting-cards and the marking on my linen and what not. I didn't plan the deception, I didn't really. I only meant to take him by surprise. But when I got here he thought I was a maid trying to hire and he was so funny and formal and it was such a joke that I just couldn't resist it. And so I let him think so and made him take me and then things went on and on and a time never seemed to come to explain and things got into a worse and worse tangle until I could only pray that something would happen.

RANDOLPH. And something has happened.

BLAISDELL. Good Lord! But I reckon I

was the only one that said she was a lady. I knew she was somehow.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*recovering herself*]. Oh, what an evening of surprises! [*Advancing to Beatrice.*] My dear, if you really are Randolph's cousin, that changes the aspect of everything.

RANDOLPH [*sternly*]. It does.

MRS. DANGERFIELD. Of course in that case we would welcome you. [*She stretches out both hands to Beatrice to take hers but the latter draws back and Mrs. Dangerfield, as if not noticing, turns to Randolph.*] And now, Randolph, as it was all a mistake, you and Julia can make it up. [*With a shaking of the head to the company.*] Oh, these lovers' quarrels!

RANDOLPH. After all that has passed I think Julia will hardly care to do that. Shall Mark see you to the gate, Mrs. Dangerfield?

JULIA. Come on, ma. Can't you see that Ranny's in one of his tempers now? We'd better go. He can come over and see me in the morning. [*With an arch smile at Randolph which he does not notice.*]

MRS. DANGERFIELD. We will part then for the present. I and Julia will come to call on your cousin in a few days, Randolph.

RANDOLPH. You are most considerate.

MRS. DANGERFIELD [*taking Mark's arm*]. Good evening, Miss Cameron.

BEATRICE. Good night.

BLAISDELL. I reckon I'll go, too. [*He offers his arm to Julia, who takes it.*] I've got your ring, you know. [*They go out, Julia with a backward smile at Randolph which he does not*

return. Beatrice watches Randolph. As soon as they are gone, she jumps to him.]

BEATRICE. Oh, you poor boy, what an escape!

RANDOLPH. So you are Beatrice?

BEATRICE. I am. Don't you like me just as well, nice person?

RANDOLPH. I tried to be honorable, to keep my word to them like a gentleman.

BEATRICE. They did it themselves. That's the nice part of it.

RANDOLPH. I tried to keep my word but — my God! What I've been through! You must know that I'm madly in love with you. Will you marry me?

BEATRICE. Oh! [*She makes a queer little gesture, half raising herself, holding her arms close to her, and gazing into his eyes, till she closes hers when he takes her in his arms. He kisses her and then she opens her eyes again, looking deep into his.*]

BEATRICE. Oh, do you smell the roses and honeysuckle now? Do you hear the robin's dear twilight song?

RANDOLPH. Oh, my little love!

BEATRICE. You'll have to take me in and introduce me to the boys. I have been very naughty but I'll never play another prank again, nice person, because I love you so!

[CURTAIN]

AT THE CHURCH DOOR

The time is today

THE PERSONS ARE:

PAN.
MINERVA.
THE BRIDEGROOM.
THE BRIDE.

[*One sees the vestibule of an old and very aristocratic church in New York City. It is a large vestibule, the church itself being large, is sealed in dark weathered oak carved in Gothic style. The floor is dark grey marble. Some small electric lights in bulbs — the only modern innovation — designed to represent candles, stand out high on the walls and give the only light so that the place is rather dim and the farther corners quite obscure. Rice is scattered on the floor, bits of smilax and asparagus fern and some broken flowers, including the head of a white rose. Swinging double doors are on either side of the back opening into the church, and through one of these slowly, silently, cautiously, Pan enters, clad in his long, beautiful spotted leopard's skin and with his pipe, Syrinx, and his shepherd's crook in one hand. He is rather tall, perfectly formed, young, with no beard, but a fair skin, shaggy brown hair over his pointed ears, full red lips*

and blue eyes that would be laughing but are now serious, almost stern. He peers about, looking at everything curiously, goes to one of the electric lights and puffs up at it, trying to blow it out, smiles and tosses his head when he is unable to do so, and then kicks about the rice and strewn flowers, suddenly sees the head of the white rose and stands transfixed, gazing at it. As he stands there gazing at the ground Minerva appears from a shadowy corner. She is very tall and straight and statuesque, very perfect and unapproachable, with eyes far apart and dark brown hair flowing. She is clad in stiff long grey draperies that give almost the appearance of marble, wears her breast-plate and helmet and carries her spear in her right hand, her shield with the Medusa head on it in her left. She, too, seems preoccupied with the appearance of the floor and does not notice Pan. He, at her approach, starts violently, then seeing who it is, he smiles in surprise and relief.]

PAN. Well, by all the gods, Minerva, you gave me a start! I took you for a person, not the personification of wisdom. Where on earth did you come from?

MINERVA. From heaven, of course, my dear Pan.

PAN. Heaven, where there are no broken flowers. [*He kicks viciously at the head of the white rose.*]

MINERVA. They ought not to break them here, it is a waste and unsightly, too.

PAN. Even broken flowers are not unsightly.

MINERVA. All this strewn rice, too, is wasteful, unsightly, and quite improper in the sacred precincts of a church. I never knew it to be thrown even in the vestibule of a church before.

PAN. I suppose it is what they call pagan.

MINERVA. I don't know why the rector permitted it.

PAN. He couldn't help himself — sometimes they can't. It was that little faun-like brother of the bride that did it. [*He leans over and picks up the head of the white rose and caresses it.*] But what on earth are you doing here?

MINERVA. What, on earth, I always do, attend to the affairs of poor mortals and endeavor to direct them into profitable occupations.

PAN. Oh, pooh! If I remember you had a hand in the destruction of Troy — if you call that a profitable occupation.

MINERVA. Wars are sometimes necessary so that the wise, the salutary, the safe, the logical, the lawful may triumph over the emotional, the mad, the poor.

PAN [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Oh, if you want to call it that — and of course you do and will. For my part, I believe it is your safe and sane folks, your purely rational people who drive my natural creatures into hunger and madness and poverty and then beat them for being wild and unwise.

MINERVA. Mentality must triumph. After I have destroyed your poor, mad creatures I lead my victors into the peaceful occupations of art and commerce, especially commerce.

PAN. Your victors, humph! Don't forget that all people are at bottom my people. They never get away from that. And they all, my poor mad ones too, still propagate. By the way, talking about your occupations and art, if I remember correctly, after you invented the flute, you happened to see your reflection when you were playing it, in the smooth lake below you and found your cheeks were bulged out and red and your eyes poppy, so you threw the flute away. Think of it, to throw away a flute! But ugliness and beauty, like the sweet notes of the flute and your bulging cheeks, exist together in nature and so must be in art.

MINERVA. Not at all. Art chooses only the smooth and beautiful and the correct.

PAN. Don't you think it! My little mad creatures today intrigue the artist much more intensely than all your well-mannered classics. But this is just like you, Minerva, getting me hot in an argument.

MINERVA [*quietly*]. I didn't get you into any argument.

PAN. Oh, didn't you? You with your generalities and placid conservatism, and correctness and unnatural theories! Great Jove, you maddden me!

MINERVA [*with the utmost indifference*]. You are quite foolish to be maddened by anything.

PAN. Oh, am I not? You drive me to desperation. I, who never discuss or analyse! I, who despise all your mental gymnastics! But a god can't be with you two minutes without getting

into an argument with you. What I want to know is, what you are doing here?

MINERVA. What are you doing, Pan?

PAN. There you are again! That is just like you, too. Answering my question with a counter question, getting out of the truth by throwing the interest into the other side of the balance. Asking me a question which you know very well I'll answer. For I always answer. Why shouldn't I? I've nothing to hide. I don't hide things. And I wouldn't hide anything if I had it to hide. Waugh! How you make me fume!

MINERVA. You are becoming incoherent. You came here because?

PAN. Oh, yes. I'm here on account of a girl, of course. You might know. Oh, she is the sweetest, the dearest, the belovédest thing in the whole universe!

MINERVA. You are extravagant. Untutored nature is extravagant.

PAN. Don't you care. We have the vitality to afford it.

MINERVA. I deplore waste.

PAN. I despise the niggardly.

MINERVA [*with a just perceptible smile, and shrugging of the shoulders*]. You'll be in an argument again before you know it. Where is your girl? Why don't you follow her?

PAN. Follow her? I can't. I don't want to. That's the Hades of it. [*He gives a vicious kick at the strewn rice.*]

MINERVA [*a trifle interested and taking a step towards him*]. I never knew Pan to stop

at anything. What prevents you now?

PAN. She's just married — that's the trouble — she's just gone off with her husband. Oh! [*Stamping up and down and kicking at things violently.*] I could swear by all the gods on high Olympus or in ancient Egypt! I could tear this sacred edifice stone from stone! I could —

MINERVA. It doesn't do a bit of good for you to rage.

PAN. Doesn't it, though? That's all you know about it, you with your civilization! It's better to be in a rage than in nothing at all. It's good to be in a rage if you can't be in something else. It is good to be in anger if you can't be in joy.

MINERVA [*her lip curling*]. How absurdly emotional you are.

PAN. Any one would be who was in love with such a wonderful girl. [*With a deep sigh.*] But I've just attended her wedding. She stood up all clad in white with a veil over her head and all bedecked with flowers like a lamb for the sacrifice — stood up before the high-priest and was given body and soul, for the soul goes with the body, to that stick in black. Didn't you see the ceremony?

MINERVA. I did not enter. I am of a different religion entirely but I respect their rites.

PAN. Humph! I go anywhere.

MINERVA. And respect nothing.

PAN. Oh, yes I do — the real things.

MINERVA. But this girl? The wedding has just taken place in here?

PAN. Yes.

MINERVA [*with a subtle smile and approaching him*]. Tell me about it.

PAN. She is the most captivating girl I ever ran across. The nymphs aren't in it with her. I have been following her and making love to her and she has loved me — oh, her love was marvelous! She is my true mate. She cares for all the things of mine. She climbed the mountains with me and wandered on the banks of brooks. We gathered violets together and she loved all the little live creatures and her hands stroked their furry backs. We sat on the sea cliffs and listened to the crash of the green waves. She gloried in storms and in disturbing starlight nights, in white clouds against the June blue, and in the rose and gold and apple-green and lavender of sunsets. I kissed her under the flowering dogwoods in the spring and under the scarlet maple in the autumn. [*He is silent a moment in the memory.*]

MINERVA [*recalling him*]. Well?

PAN. Oh, yes. I had only the universe to give her and her family wanted her to own four brick walls and have a gas furnace.

MINERVA [*a little nervously*]. But the young man she married?

PAN. Oh, yes. Her family selected him because he is a hard worker and would make her a good living and is altogether moral, and she acquiesced, that being the way of mortals and he a personable fellow.

MINERVA [*forgetting herself*]. Oh, he is admirable!

PAN [*with a quick, divining look at her*]. Ah, you know him? By the way what brought *you* to the wedding? I wonder!

MINERVA. Oh, why didn't you take her out of his way? Why didn't you marry her?

PAN. Marry? I never spoke of marrying. I said she is my mate.

MINERVA. It's the same thing.

PAN [*fiercely*]. It is *not* the same thing.

MINERVA. Oh, well, why quibble about words. Why didn't you mate with her, then?

PAN. Perhaps I did.

MINERVA. But why didn't you take her away? Why didn't you get her out of his way? Can't you see, she will ruin his life?

PAN. Olympus and Hades! [*Stamping.*] Ruin *his* life? I wish something could! [*He crumples up the head of the white rose, tears it into shreds and tosses it to the floor.*] But nothing will ever turn him from the even tenor and the keen pursuit of business. He with his sleek ways and self-respect and self-control and hypocrisy! It is he that will corrupt her life.

MINERVA. He would improve anything he touched. He will make her saner, more practical, more efficient. But she will be a stone about his neck.

PAN. Practical? [*With a cry that is almost a wail.*] He will squeeze all the sweet romance out of her. He will file off all the beautiful edges and press out all the wild loveliness until she is as commonplace and durable and mechanical and horrible as he!

MINERVA. You are very unreasonable, Pan.

This youth who has won my admiration is straight and healthy and capable because he has always been self-controlled and lacked the passions that destroy so many young men. He never kissed a female in his life till his nuptual kiss.

PAN. Oh, the fool!

MINERVA. He is strong and unenervated and will make a noble captain in case we go to war. Otherwise, he pursues his business diligently and makes much money by the manufacture of ladies' shoes.

PAN [*snorting*]. Ladies' shoes! Ugly things unlike the human feet! I'd rather have my hoof than those high-heeled, pointed-toed monstrosities. The gods, Minerva, how you provoke me! I would like to choke you! [*His fingers clutching the air*] — to choke the life out of you! But it is impossible to kill you — your cold sanity will live as long as there is selfishness in the world! Manufacturer of ladies' shoes!

[*Just as he speaks footsteps are heard, they both draw back into the shadowy corners, and the bridegroom enters from the side. He is dressed in his smooth, correct wedding garments and is a clean, straight young man not fair not dark, not tall not small, not distinctive in any way except that he has small sharp eyes close together. He looks about on the floor as if hunting for something and, not finding it, is about to go hurriedly through the swinging doors into the main body of the church when Minerva steps out with a deep sigh and detains him.*]

MINERVA. Ah!

BRIDEGROOM [*with a violent start he turns, then faces her and bows low*]. Goddess!

MINERVA. You could not leave me! You have returned to me!

BRIDEGROOM. I — I didn't know you were here. I came back to hunt for something. My — my wife dropped her handkerchief somewhere and she wouldn't let any one look for it but me.

MINERVA. Mortal females are silly and exacting.

BRIDEGROOM. But it is quite right for a wife to believe a husband can do things more thoroughly than any one else.

MINERVA [*ignoring his remark*]. Did you not know I would be here? Your reason must have told you I would.

BRIDEGROOM. Why, no. I figured it out that you would go straight back to Olympus. That would have been the sensible thing for you to do.

MINERVA. I will not give you up.

BRIDEGROOM. But I have a wife. Do you realise that I was just now married in there? [*Stretching his hand out towards the church.*]

MINERVA. That makes no difference.

BRIDEGROOM. It does to me. I am morally opposed to promiscuity. [*Pan gives vent to a wild laugh. The Bridegroom starts in alarm.*] What was that?

MINERVA. Nothing but a dog that got in through the negligence of the sexton. Oh, my wise youth [*taking a long, graceful stride towards him*] do you not love me?

BRIDEGROOM [*looking cautiously to the right*

and to the left]. Goddess, I venerate you, I worship you, I follow out all your commands, you have made me what I am. I owe all my success to you. I could never have sold so many ladies' shoes if it had not been for you. The eighteen-button, Minerva trade-mark style has been enormously popular and I owe it all to you. Next year, if business continues good, I am going to put on the market a daring new style — different colors for rights and lefts; wine-color for the right, canary for the left, or green for the right, old rose for the left, for instance — the top notch of the extreme in artistic footgear. And if war comes, if it becomes necessary to kill the less practical people, I shall enlist — provided of course you get me a commission and I can be an officer. I shouldn't care to be a common soldier.

MINERVA. Then, oh, my darling, stay with me!

BRIDEGROOM. But you yourself taught me that it is wise to mate, and of course I could not do so without legal and religious sanction. Society exacts that and quite properly so. I can not afford to incur the disapproval of society. Why, the Minerva brand of ladies' high would become a drug on the market. Now I must go, I can't find the handkerchief and she is waiting in the limousine outside for me. [*He extends his white-gloved hand to Minerva to shake hands.*]

MINERVA [*with her customary long graceful stride, approaches him, clasps him in her arms, enfolding him with her shield*]. Oh, no, no, no, do not go! I can not lose you now!

BRIDEGROOM [*struggling to free himself*].

But don't you see? I must go. There is no question about it. I am married.

MINERVA [*holding him at arm's length, her left hand with the shield on her arm, clutching his right shoulder, her right hand, with the spear, his left, and with lowered head — for with her helmet she is much taller than he — gazing deep into his eyes*]. Oh, my darling, I have never cared for a man before, but thou art the fruit of the ages of my cultivation of mankind in wisdom, thou art perfect in industry, self-controlled, prudent, judicious, pitiless, wholly unemotional, discreet, untiring, persistent. I love thee as the last and most finished seed of my sowing, a product that could never have existed before in the history of man, not even in the wonderfully rational days of Rome.

BRIDEGROOM. Goddess, it is irrational for you to hold me, it is unreasonable and unlike you. I can not desert my wife now. She would sue me for divorce and an enormous alimony. It would all injure my business so that by the end of the year I should have to make an assignment. Let me go!

MINERVA. But dost thou not understand, my darling? I am the goddess of the rational mind, I am without passions, and for the first time in history I find in thee today a man I can love, one ruled wholly by his reason, domestic, yes, but passionless. Ours would be the true eugenic mating.

BRIDEGROOM. If you had proposed this before — but now I am married.

MINERVA. Come with me!

BRIDEGROOM. I must go on my wedding-trip. [*He pulls away from her and as he does so, Pan, who has been drawn by curiosity out of the shadows, laughs. The Bridegroom jumps and looks at Pan in consternation.*] My God, who is that? Perhaps he is a reporter. Oh, goodness, why did you get me into this? [*To Minerva.*]

PAN [*stepping out*]. No, I am no reporter though I use a pipe [*waving his Syrinx*] and have done staff work [*gesturing with his crook.*] You'd better stay with her, my boy, she's almost gentle and affectionate when business permits.

[*The Bridegroom gives them each a swift, alarmed, secretive look, and runs out.*]

MINERVA [*striding swiftly to Pan and angrily addressing him*]. Now see what you have done! Why didn't you stay in the shadows? It has all been your fault.

PAN. My fault, indeed! I don't wonder he ran away from you. You don't know how to make love to a man.

MINERVA. You spoiled it all by your unwarranted intrusion.

PAN. Oh, garter snakes and hoptoads! Maybe Venus has got your man.

MINERVA. Not in the least. He is not that sort. [*Loftily.*]

PAN. Anyhow, what do you care? He will be thinking of you and worshipping you even when he's lying with her, for you have the soul of him — what there is of it. It's all in his business. You can go to see him in his private office whenever you like. He won't be a bit changed.

But my little girl! My poor little girl! Living with him will change her utterly.

MINERVA. He will be very good to her.

PAN. He will not be a companion to her.

MINERVA. He will give her all that money can buy.

PAN. He will not give her what money can not buy.

MINERVA. He will be wise and practical.

PAN. Living with him will gradually rub off all her bloom and dry up all the sap of her loveliness until she becomes unlovable. Oh, there is the terrible part of it — that she will not be lovable and I shall not love her! Oh, I shall lose my beautiful love of her!

[*A slight noise is heard, they both start back again into the shadows, and the Bride comes running in. She is too exquisite to be described. As she looks about, Pan emerges from the shadows.*]

BRIDE [*her head thrown back, a look of rapture on her face*]. Ah, you!

PAN [*coming to her*]. My little love, my nymph, my little blue dove with velvet eyes, my wood anemone!

BRIDE. He — my — my husband — forgive the word — told me there was some strange person in here, an insane man in a leopard's skin, and I knew from his halting, silly description it must be you. You with your robe of the starry night.

PAN. You came back to me, my little fair faun.

BRIDE. Why, truly, I couldn't think of your

being here without running to you. [*She approaches him and strokes his shaggy hair.*]

PAN. Then you love me, heart's desire? [*He takes her in his arms.*]

BRIDE. Oh, absolument! [*She snuggles up to him and lays her lovely head on his breast.*]

PAN. Then we will go at once to the hills.

BRIDE. Oh, no, dearest, I can not go with you because I am married. I had to marry, of course, you can see that.

PAN. No, May-apple, I can not see it.

BRIDE. Oh, but it is quite plain, a girl must marry. That is quite plain.

PAN. Must a girl marry a man when she is in love with a god?

BRIDE. Why, yes, of course, if it is necessary.

PAN. That is your accursed civilization, the world of Minerva. How I would rend it and tear it to shreds and trample it under my feet and scatter it to the four winds! And I will one day, my little wood-pigeon. My day will come when I will triumph over the mediocre, the half-baked, the artificial, the false, when in a world of green and rose men will live with me in all their potent grace.

BRIDE [*leaning to him and closing her eyes*]. Oh, my lover! My beautiful lover!

PAN. You are all mine! [*He kisses her hotly.*]

BRIDE. I have never loved any one else. You have given me joy and loveliness. You are in my blood and in my nerves, and you alone. I tingle to the madness of the wind and thrill to the beauty of blossoms — and it is all you. When

I hear music, it is you piping on the hillside and when I see dancing it is you among the apple orchards. It is always you.

PAN [*leaning over her*]. You have ravished me, belovéd. You are dearer than deity. Come!

[*A noise is heard outside. The Bride raises her head and listens.*]

BRIDE. My husband is coming! I must go. [*She looks up at Pan, raising her shoulders to him and clasping him.*] I love you!

PAN. Oh, you, the little burnt offering on the fires of utility! You, my little wild rose!

BRIDE. Oh, I love you!

[*They kiss passionately. Then with a deep sigh he loosens his hold of her in a moment's weariness of passion and she quickly pulls away from him and runs. She disappears and Pan is left standing looking after her. For a space nothing is said, then Minerva comes out of the shadows.*]

MINERVA. Oh, you poor, blundering, inadequate, impotent thing! [*Pan does not answer her nor even seem to hear her but stands as if in a trance.*] Oh, you wretched makeshift of a god! Why didn't you hold her? Why didn't you run away with her when you had the opportunity? You have by your errors and awkward bungling ruined everything.

PAN [*at last looking over at her*]. Not for you, Minerva. Your man will still worship you. But, oh, my beautiful girl!

MINERVA. It is almost pitiful — if anything could be pitiful — to see a creature like you, Pan. You are strong enough, very well developed phy-

sically, but you will never try to use your head. Why don't you learn to? Why don't you think and plan? Why don't you scheme? [*With more anger than she has ever shown.*] By your silly passion and inexcusable blundering you have ruined everything. You have produced this perfectly deplorable situation.

PAN. Minerva, if I stay here I shall certainly try to kill you. I would smash your helmet into irredeemable junk so that you could never have it restored to fit your worthy head again, and I would shiver your spear into a thousand bits, and I would fasten your shield for a fender on a subway car. That for you, Minerva. But I go back to my flocks on the hillside, to my music and to my stars. You hold the stage. [*He turns and goes out slowly. As he goes the curtain falls.*]

HONEY

In this play there has been no attempt to express the dialect of the mountain people but only to suggest it. The characters have not been given names because they are all types or symbols, rather. The Child only, being the most distinct with sweetness and strength, is called by the name her mother used.

CHARACTERS

THE MAN.
THE WOMAN.
THE CHILD, HONEY.
THE MILL-WOMAN.
THE MILL-GIRL.
THE NEIGHBOR.

ACT I

[*It is a Sunday afternoon of spring in a southern mountain mill city. The action takes place in the home of a family of cotton-mill workers, a rude little cabin in the beginning of the story kept closely shut up, not admitting any of the outside thrilling air of spring. The family consists of the father, the mother, and the little girl, who have recently moved in from the mountains. The cabin has but one room, is unplastered and very bare. At the middle of the back of the stage — the front of*

the room — there is the outer door with a window on either side of it. On one side of the room stands a worn-out cook-stove and on the other an old bed where the father and mother sleep. A sort of trundle-bed arrangement is at the foot of the bed, for the child. Some dull, worn clothes hang on nails against the wall near the bed — a man's musty trousers, a woman's faded blue calico dress and other things. On the other side of the room between the cook-stove and the window is a cheap old safe with perforated tin front. Toward the center of the room but nearer the stove stands a plain deal kitchen table where the family eat. Hanging up against the window frame on this same side of the room is a small cracked mirror and just below it is nailed a paper-box as a receptacle for comb and brush. Below this, on a chair, is a bucket of water and a tin dipper. On a shelf behind the stove is a coal-oil lamp. A few geraniums in tin tomato cans are on the window-sills. The bare floor is scrubbed spotlessly clean. There is a strip of frayed carpet by the bed. A disjointed, squeaking rocking-chair and two or three other rickety chairs stand about. The rocking-chair is in front of the stove, placed so that its occupant can be near the warmth and at the same time be able to look out of the window. In it sits a man, tall, big, bony, with a full, long, beard, and smoking a pipe. He sits there silently smoking for a few minutes, gazing at the rather feeble fire in the cook-stove, once or twice he slowly looks out of the window.

Finally a slight noise is heard outside and a woman and little girl enter. The woman might have been pretty a few years before. She is worn-looking now and old-looking, as the mountain women become while still young, but even hard work has not quite dulled the wistfulness in her blue eyes. The girl is a slight young thing, very tall for her age but a child still, with eyes blue as her mountain sky, delicate skin, and that enchanting thinness of youth which is like the austere first sweetness of spring. There is personality in her, new to the world as she is. She has a captivating loveliness both in her physical beauty and in the wistfulness, tenderness, and élan of her look. She is rare, exquisite. She carries a bunch of violets in her hand. When they come in the woman slowly and rather tiredly takes off her wraps and hangs them up and nothing is said for a few minutes. The girl goes to the safe, gets down a broken old tea-cup which she fills with water from the pail, puts the violets in, placing them on the table. She touches the blossoms gently, fondling them with her fingers, stands off and looks at them and finally begins dancing about quietly and singing to herself.]

MAN [*crustily and without looking up at them at all*]. You liked to stay out all night. You been galivanting ever since dinner-time.

[*The girl shrinks and looks at the Man in fear, then goes on with her dancing and singing to herself, but very quietly.*]

WOMAN. It ain't late, pap. It ain't near sundown.

MAN. Sun don't go down early now. It's spring. But it's right cold all the same. I don't see what you want to be fooling along outdoors for.

WOMAN. Feels good to be out.

MAN. That's what you always say. You always was queer. Always mooning round outdoors up in the mountains.

WOMAN. Ain't much outdoors in town, nohow, not real outdoors. So me and Honey walked real far out into something like the country where there was a road soft to your foot and springy, and a little branch. There ain't no outdoors in town, nohow. Nothing but houses and factories and hard streets, fences and bricks and mud. A person misses the tall trees standing close and big, with all their leaves still in each other's shade, and all the nice bushes and underbrush and mossy rocks and wild-flowers and the birds and the little grassy branch picking its way down through the ravine to the valley.

MAN [*sneeringly*]. I reckon you miss the snakes, too. Rattlers. [*Suddenly and very angrily to the little girl.*] Can't you stop that cavorting round?

[*She starts as if from a blow and goes over to her low bed, sitting down on it, from which lowly position she closely watches her father and mother.*]

WOMAN. Now, pap, no rattle-snake never bit me nor you, neither. I guess if a person has got sense in his head he can keep clear of a rattler.

MAN. Shut that door, can't you?

WOMAN. Air smells so good, pap. [*Shutting the door.*]

MAN. Then stay out in it *all* the time. You know well enough that just last summer a rattler bit Bill Davis so as he swelled up and turned black afore he died.

WOMAN. Yes, and I know that Bill Davis was drunk all the time so as he couldn't get out of the way of a rattler nor even a cow. Most like he laid down in the nest of one for a sleep. Whisky's good for a rattle-snake bite and so the pizen oughtn't to have had no effect on Bill for his skin was certainly tight with whisky.

MAN. You have to take whisky *after* the bite, you fool.

WOMAN. Bill made the mistake of taking his afore.

MAN. When you going to get supper?

WOMAN. Be you hungry aready?

MAN. No, but I'm tired of hearing you talk.

WOMAN. I can get it right away, pappy.

MAN. This stove don't burn good. You ought to fix it.

WOMAN. I was just waiting to get supper because one of the mill hands said she was coming in.

MAN [*with some annoyance*]. Well, if she's coming, I reckon I'll go out for a spell.

[*There is a knock at the door.*]

WOMAN. That's likely her now. [*She goes to the door, opens it, and a woman enters. She is very young but pale and exceedingly thin and worn-looking, with large, pitiful staring grey*

eyes. She wears a shawl over her head.] Howdy. Walk right in.

[*The Man settles down in his chair again and smokes silently and rather sullenly without looking at the woman. The Mill-woman does not speak at first but with a hunted furtive glance looks all about the room.*]

MILL-WOMAN. Ain't you got no children?

WOMAN. Just my little daughter here. [*Smiling and pointing to the girl who sits on her bed watching them.*]

MILL-WOMAN. She's a big girl, not a child no more. She must be as old as I was when I got married.

WOMAN. She's well-growed and tall but she's young. She's just my little daughter, my Honey.

MILL-WOMAN. Didn't you have no others?

WOMAN. Yes, I did. Won't you set down? [*She places a chair for her visitor, herself taking the other rickety one.*] Yes, I had three others, two of them afore her and one after her up in the mountains. But they all died.

MILL-WOMAN. It would be handy for you now if they was alive. They could all work in the mill. Three more — that would bring in right smart of money. But you had a small family, didn't you? Only four.

[*Honey gets up and goes over to the pail of water, picks up the dipper and takes a drink, after which she goes back to her low seat.*]

WOMAN. No, I didn't have my children fast as some. They wasn't sickly, either, they was nice healthy babies, but the fever carried them off, pore little things.

[*The Man pays no attention to them but sits doggedly smoking with his back to them.*]

MILL-WOMAN. They're a lot of trouble. They make you sick coming, they pull you down whilst they're nursing, then they're sick and cross, and you don't get your strength back between them. For all the little money they bring in at the mills, they don't pay, nohow. But you can't help it. That's what a woman's got to bear.

[*The Man gets up, knocks the ashes out of his pipe into the grate of the stove with slow, lazy movements, and still paying no attention to them but keeping his back to them, he takes his hat down from the nail where it hangs by the door and goes out. While he is doing this the women talk on.*]

WOMAN. You're right young, ain't you? How many children have you got?

MILL-WOMAN [*furtively watching the Man and speaking slowly and interruptedly because of her attention to him*]. Yes, ma'am. But I got four aready, three living and one dead. I liked to cried my eyes out when it died, but it wasn't no use. [*The Man bangs the door shut behind him. Honey sits on her bed and watches every movement of her father till he goes out. Then she gets up, goes to the table and pets the violets again, and gradually she begins dancing about, swaying from side to side, singing to herself, her eyes radiant.*] Was that your old man?

WOMAN. Yes.

MILL-WOMAN. I reckon he don't like woman talk.

WOMAN. I reckon not.

MILL-WOMAN. Men don't. Well, as I was a-saying, that baby died and I liked to cried my eyes out but it was a puny, weakly little thing and maybe it couldn't have worked in the mills, nohow, and it's just as well it went. The Lord, he knows best. My oldest can work a little now in the mill. The others ain't old enough to work nor to take care of one another and when I leave them to home I am worried to death for fear they'll set fire to the house or fall down the cistern.

WOMAN. Can't their father take care of them?

MILL-WOMAN. My old man? Not him. He don't want to be tied down. Sometimes he shuts them up in the house and then they cry if they're not asleep, and sometimes he just leaves them loose. Then's when I think of the cistern.

[*Honey has been quite joyous, sings aloud a quaint country tune and dances gayly.*]

WOMAN. Honey, child, you're making a lot of noise. [*To the Mill-Woman.*] Oh, but you oughtn't to do that. I'm awful sorry. I wonder if you could bring them here and shut them up. But I reckon my old man wouldn't allow it.

[*Honey still dances quite wildly but lowers her voice in her singing. There is a knock at the door. The Woman gets up and opens it to another woman. This woman is stronger and healthier than the other two. She is not tall but is heavily built with big bones and broad shoulders. The red blood shows in her coarse skin and her dark eyes*

have a shine to them. When she comes in Honey stops her dancing instantly, watches the woman strangely and goes to sit down on her low bed. As the conversation proceeds she takes out a big handkerchief and works at it making a rabbit of it but all the while quietly watching the woman and never a word of their talk is lost upon her.]

NEIGHBOR. Well, what you two jawing about?

WOMAN. We wasn't jawing. She was just telling me about her baby dying and all her hardships.

NEIGHBOR. Oh, she always tells everybody that. I guess she don't have no more trouble than other people. [*She pulls the Man's rocking-chair about and sits down in it. The Woman takes her former chair now between the others.*] She's young and having her children and thinks nobody has got as bad times as her. If her old man died like mine did last year, she'd know what real trouble was.

MILL-WOMAN. I 'spose I'd get along about as well without him as with. He don't do no work. I can't see but what you get along as well without yours as with. He didn't do no work. The men don't none of them do no work.

NEIGHBOR. There ain't no men's work in the mills for them to do, that's why.

MILL-WOMAN. Seems as if they could find some kind of work somewheres else.

NEIGHBOR. What's the use when the children's wages is enough to live on?

MILL-WOMAN. But the women and children have to work so hard. Your own children are all puny pale little critters.

NEIGHBOR. You talk most onreligious.

MILL-WOMAN [*displaying more spirit than could have been expected of her*]. *Me* onreligious! I'm the most religiousest woman ever you knowed! Why, when I got religion I got it so hard I carried on till I fell in a faint and it took them three hours to bring me to. *Me* onreligious!

NEIGHBOR. Well, the Lord's plan is all right, ain't it? Seems to fit in with the mill-owner's plan, anyways. He's ruling our lives, ain't he? Him and the mill-owners. It ain't right to try to outface your betters. What's the difference if the men don't work? Every female needs a man and it seems as if it took a widow to tell you so.

MILL-WOMAN [*sighing wearily*]. I don't feel as if I needed a man so much as some rest. [*To the Woman.*] How long you been a-working in the mill?

WOMAN. Just a week. We come to town a week ago.

NEIGHBOR. Where did you come from?

WOMAN. Up in the mountains.

NEIGHBOR. It must be awful lonesome away up there.

WOMAN. Me and Honey weren't never lonesome.

MILL-WOMAN. How do you stand the work in the mills?

WOMAN. Oh, it's dreadful long and tiresome. Seems as if my back would never get used

to it and I can't bear to see my little girl get so tired.

MILL-WOMAN. All the children gets tired.

WOMAN. It hurts me to see them.

NEIGHBOR. Oh, shucks! You're mighty chicken-hearted. Anyway you can't help it. It ain't for us to try and change the world. The rich men as owns the mills knows what they want and they're going to have it. Children has got to work in the mills. That's what life is. [*She rocks back and forth with great enjoyment.*] How does the old man like town?

WOMAN. I guess he likes it well enough. He wanted to come.

NEIGHBOR [*laughing in high glee*]. I bet he did!

WOMAN [*innocently*]. And Honey wanted to come.

NEIGHBOR. Well, I can see what *he* wanted to come for — to put you two in the mills and let you earn his bacon and baccy — but I can't see for the life of me what *she* wanted to come for unless she's a plumb idjit.

WOMAN [*with spirit*]. It's just because she *ain't* a plumb idjit that she wanted to come. Honey's got some notion in her head about larning. I don't just know what. Tell them, Honey, about the Teacher.

HONEY [*speaking slowly and raptly as if remembering a vision*]. It was one day up in the mountains the teacher came, last spring — this time. There was violets and the new grass smelling cold and fresh and the little new leaves all starting to come out and a mocking-bird was sing-

ing. The Teacher came. It was like a angel's visit. And I heard tell how you can get larning. How girls can larn to be strong and clean and take care of theirselves, how they can larn to do all kind of useful things and help others to be happy. The Teacher told me all that.

NEIGHBOR. Well, you poor fool, you ain't expecting to meet up with a teacher and be associating with such as them down here?

HONEY. No — no — only I want to get some larning and maybe I could if I could find the Teacher. The Teacher would help me.

NEIGHBOR [*laughing her unpleasant harsh laugh*]. Help you nothing! Rich folks don't want to help you. All they want is to get work out of you, like they do out of their machines.

HONEY. The Teacher was like a angel.

NEIGHBOR. Well, you'll never hear tell of your angel again.

HONEY. Maybe I will — maybe I will.

NEIGHBOR. Maybe you won't — you little fool.

WOMAN. I wisht you wouldn't talk that way to her.

NEIGHBOR [*angrily*]. Oh, you do, do you? Well, I'll talk any way I please. I don't have to ast *you* how to talk. [*Growing more angry.*] For such as *you* to be insulting me, to be telling me how to talk polite! You pore mountain white trash! You pore miserable thing, common as pig-tracks!

WOMAN [*flushing and getting to her feet with rising anger*]. You ain't got no call to talk that way to me.

NEIGHBOR. I guess I can talk any way I want to. I don't have to be told how by the likes of you — such trash, ain't fit to be associating with. I don't know why I came in here. I know how to talk better than you.

WOMAN. Maybe you know how but you don't know where, and you can't do it in my house.

NEIGHBOR *Your* house! [*She rises and stands glowering, her hands on her hips.*] Awful fine house *you* got! I guess you ain't got enough money hardly to pay your rent even. *Your* house! If it's anybody's house it's the old man's house and I guess *he* wouldn't be turning me out. You — you darst to be insulting me! [*She clenches her fist and shakes it at the Woman as if she were going to strike her. Honey rushes up, throwing her arms about her mother as if to protect her.*]

HONEY. Mammy, mammy, don't you fight her!

MILL-WOMAN. There, there. [*To the Woman.*] Don't you pay no attention to her. She's always fussing with somebody. Don't you let her fight you.

HONEY. Mammy, dear, please don't do nothing! Please don't fight her!

WOMAN [*as if remembering herself*]. Fight? Me? No, of course I won't fight. I — I am ashamed of myself for showing my temper so. I'm awful sorry.

NEIGHBOR [*with an ugly triumphant smile*]. Well, if you're apologizing, I reckon I'll have to accept of your apology. But you have got a

awful quick temper and sharp tongue. It's all on account of your spilt child.

MILL-WOMAN. I guess I'll be going. I got to get supper for him. [*She rises and puts her shawl over her head.*]

NEIGHBOR. I guess I'll go, too. I didn't mean to stay when I come.

MILL-WOMAN [*noticing the flowers on the table*]. Been to the woods?

WOMAN. Yes, I get kind of homesick for the mountains. We went for a walk today, me and Honey.

NEIGHBOR. You'll get all that taken out of your hide after you've been in town a while. [*She laughs her cackling, derisive laugh and touches the violets roughly. Honey jumps up, runs over to the table and catches away the cup of flowers, not angrily but as if she were protecting something precious. The Neighbor looks at her and throws back her head, laughing amusedly and tauntingly. Honey retreats to a corner where she watches the woman with fear and trouble in her eyes.*]

NEIGHBOR. Hoity, toity! She's got a temper, too, a bad, bad temper of her own.

WOMAN [*paying no attention to this*]. Well, come again.

MILL-WOMAN. There ain't no time for visiting. After a person has worked all day they want to rest. I get so tired.

NEIGHBOR. Oh, law! You don't get tireder than the rest of us. [*They go.*]

[*Honey rushes up to her mother, throws her arms around her and they kiss. Then she*

hops and dances about the room singing in a little high voice, "Violets, violets, pretty, pretty violets — my own violets — pretty, pretty violets."]

WOMAN. Now, child, I'm going to see if I can find your pap. I don't just like where he goes. He goes to a saloon, my dear, and the men drink too much. I'll be back soon. You put the kettle on and start supper.

HONEY. Mammy, I hate that neighbor woman. She lied about you. You ain't bad-tempered and you're good to everybody.

WOMAN [*smiling*]. I'm awful thankful you kept me from striking her, lambie. I don't know what I was thinking of but I almost forgot myself. I never did such a thing before. But she's our neighbor and she don't mean no harm.

HONEY. Yes, she does. She does mean harm, mammy. She's mean and I hate her. But, oh, I love you, mammy, my own mammy. [*She clings to her mother and kisses her.*]

WOMAN. I got to go now, Honey, child. You start to fix supper.

[*The Woman throws a shawl over her head and goes out. Honey dips water out of the bucket into the tea-kettle and places it on the stove, after which she goes to the safe and looks inside. Then she opens the door and stands looking out. A girl comes along the street and stops.*]

MILL-GIRL [*looking in*]. Howdy. [*She is rather pretty and wild-looking with a sort of vixenish vivacity unusual among the cotton-mill workers. She is older but no taller than the other*

child.] Are you all by yourself? [*Peering curiously about the room.*]

HONEY. Yes. Come in.

MILL-GIRL [*entering*]. Your pap and mam gone out?

HONEY. Yes. I'm starting supper.

MILL-GIRL. Oh, supper! I got to go home and get supper, too. Do you know how to dance the monkey-dance?

HONEY. No. Do you?

MILL-GIRL. You bet I do. Want I should show you? [*She dances the monkey-dance, a strange figure known to the mountaineers. Honey is spell-bound watching her.*]

MILL-GIRL. Don't you want to try?

HONEY. Oh, yes, but I'm afraid I couldn't.

MILL-GIRL. You do it this way. [*She goes on with the weird figure. Honey starts in, too, dancing quite wildly but not at all the monkey-dance.*]

MILL-GIRL [*laughing. Honey laughs, too, in very glee*]. Shucks! You don't do it right, but you could larn. My mam's sick. Anyhow you don't have to get supper for a big family. [*She stops dancing.*]

HONEY. Have you got lots of brothers and sisters?

MILL-GIRL. You bet I have. Five younger than me and we're all working in the mills and giving our wages regular to pap. I'm getting tired of it, I am. Giving up all my wages to him, and I'm going to do something to stop it.

HONEY. What are you going to do?

MILL-GIRL. Get married.

HONEY. *You?* Aready?

MILL-GIRL. You bet I am. [*She tosses her head and dances again.*] Why don't you, too? Any boy'll do it for you. Then you can keep your wages. A married woman gets to keep her wages, *she* does. [*With great gusto.*] She don't have to give it to her pap. Come along and do it, too.

HONEY. But I don't want to get married.

MILL-GIRL. Well, after you've worked a while longer and give up all your wages week after week to your pap, you'll think different.

HONEY. I want some larning. I want to go to school.

MILL-GIRL. School? Shucks! That ain't going to do you no good. Anyhow, you can't. You got to work and make money. If you get married you can keep the money. The girls all does it. I'm going to next week, maybe sooner. S'long.

[*The Mill-Girl goes out and Honey shuts the door and begins her preparations for supper. She goes to the safe and brings out a loaf of bread, some knives and forks, etc., which she places on the table, and begins to cut the bread when there is a knock at the door. She goes to the door, opens it and starts back with wide-eyed delight and astonishment. At first she can not speak and when she does her voice is tense with excitement.*]

HONEY. You are — you are — the Teacher! Oh, I'd know you anywheres! You was standing by the rhodedendron bushes that day last

spring with all the light on your hair behind, and the sun had just went down over the mountains and the clouds was painted — it's different here, but you're the same. You'd be always the same anywheres. . . . Oh, yes, we come down here to live — my pap wanted to and I am going to try to get some larning. . . . Oh, yes, I work in the mill. . . . You're hunting that girl? . . . No, she ain't here now, she was here just a minute ago but she's went. . . . Oh, yes, I know her. . . . Oh, yes, she said she was going to get married next week. Ain't that funny? . . . Yes, I can tell you where she lives. You go down this street till you come to a big house, a great big empty house with windows, that's the cotton-mill. And then you cross the street and keep on till you come to two, no three, little houses, and she lives in the last one. . . . Yes, you'll find her, for she just went home to get supper for her folks. [*After a longer pause and as if listening very intensely.*] Oh — Oh, if ever I need you I should come to you? [*In the utmost radiance.*] You tell me that? Oh, I promise I'll come! . . . Oh! [*She impulsively steps outside the door as if called to receive something, but scarcely goes beyond sight, her shoulders and flowing hair showing at the side of the door. When she draws back, she holds in her hands a glorious pink rose.*] Oh, you give me this to remember by? . . . Oh, I'll never forget! . . . I couldn't never forget. I couldn't never forget nohow. . . . And when I need you, I'll come to you? . . . Oh, I'll come — shorely I'll come! [*She is left standing in the doorway, the rose in her hand, gazing out*

raptly into the fading light as after a vanishing vision. Curtain to the first act.]

ACT II

[*It is summer, a week-day, after supper, but still there is daylight. The room is the same but has the look of having been lived in longer. The Man is sitting in the rocking-chair, as before, smoking his pipe. The Woman is very sick, terribly thin and white, half-reclining in bed, half propped up. She is not far from death. Honey is washing the supper dishes. A change has come in her, hardly perceptible but to be detected in her watchful eyes and wistful mouth. She calls out to her mother.*]

HONEY. Are you through with your plate?

WOMAN. Yes, I'm through.

[*Honey goes over to her mother's bed to get the plate which is almost untouched.*]

HONEY. Why, you didn't eat nothing at all. [*Solicitously.*]

WOMAN. Oh, yes, I did, Honey. I ate a lot.

HONEY [*examining the plate and looking anxious and disappointed*]. I don't know what to do with you, you naughty mammy. You don't eat nothing.

WOMAN. Oh, yes, I do, Honey. I eat more and more every day.

MAN. Folks laying in bed don't need to eat much.

HONEY [*gives him a reproachful look and then speaks to her mother*]. Can't you try to eat just a little more?

WOMAN. I couldn't swallow another bite. You finish up what little I left. [*She is very weak and speaks gaspingly.*]

HONEY. No, I've had plenty. I'll keep it for breakfast.

WOMAN. You'd better get the things ready tonight for your pap's breakfast so you won't have to hurry so in the morning afore you get off to work.

MAN [*stretching and yawning, he knocks the ashes out of his pipe and gets up*]. Well, I guess I'll step out for a spell.

[*The others say nothing. He takes his hat from the nail where it hangs and goes out. Honey proceeds with her work.*]

WOMAN. I wish you'd finish what I left, Honey. I'm afraid you're denying of yourself.

HONEY. Oh, no, I ain't. I'm eating lots. Only I ain't so awful hungry.

WOMAN. Oh, I can see how things are, Honey, you pore little lamb, though I am in bed. You're just starving yourself so as to save for your pappy and me. My savings is almost gone and if I don't get up and about soon I don't know what's to become of us. It don't seem as if you could make enough for us all.

HONEY [*stopping her work and standing still earnestly with her dish-towel in her hand*]. Mammy, couldn't pap work some? Don't men never work?

WOMAN. Yes, of course he'll try to find some

work. Men work some places but here in the mills they don't use men much. It's mostly women and children. It ain't so easy for men to find work. You mustn't think ill of your pap.

[*There is a knock at the door and Honey opens it, admitting the Mill-Woman, who, if possible, looks even paler and thinner than before. She carries a little tin bucket.*]

MILL-WOMAN. Howdy? How you feeling tonight? My, but you do look dreadful sick! I brought you a little stew. We had it for supper today and I thought maybe it would seem tasty to you.

WOMAN. You're mighty kind. I hadn't quite finished the soup you brought yesterday. I hope you ain't robbing your own family.

MILL-WOMAN. Oh, they get plenty. I see that the children ain't starved and you can count on him helping hisself. Won't you eat some stew now? It's hot.

WOMAN. I just had a great big supper and I couldn't swallow another bite. Thank you just the same. I'll eat it tomorrow.

[*There is a knock at the door, then the knob turns and the Neighbor walks in. It is evident she is not welcome to any of them. The Woman makes an effort to control her feelings and tries to smile a welcome, the Mill-Woman looks uncomfortably patient as one does in going through an unpleasant necessary experience, but Honey stiffens back and for the first time a secretive almost hard look comes into her wonderful blue eyes.*]

NEIGHBOR. I see her come in, so I thought

I'd run over and see how you was. My, but you do look awful! You're nothing but skin and bone. I guess you're getting worse fast, ain't you? I just walked in to save you the trouble of opening the door. [*Looking round the room.*] The old man ain't home, is he?

WOMAN. No, he went out.

NEIGHBOR. I reckon he gets tired of a sick woman in the house all the time. Men like women to be healthy. I don't know as I blame them. [*She smiles insinuatingly. Honey whirls the rocking-chair about and pulls the Mill-Woman by the sleeve over to it.*]

HONEY. You sit here.

WOMAN. I was healthy up in the mountains.

MILL-WOMAN. Maybe the mills makes you sick. [*She goes to the bed of the sick Woman and the Neighbor takes the rocking-chair despite the efforts of Honey to prevent it.*] Cotton gets in some folks' lungs and makes them feel sick.

WOMAN. I don't know. Only I felt all right up there in the clean air. And I wisht I was back home. I do get dreadful lonesome for the mountains. If I could only smell the piny woods. If I could only see the clouds go by over the other mountains.

NEIGHBOR. I reckon the old man wouldn't go back.

MILL-WOMAN. Seems as if it was all a mistake, your coming down here. It's made you sick, and your girl can't get the schooling she's hankering after. Up in the mountain country she could get some but here she can't get none, because she's got to work all the time. And as

for your old man, he could have smoked and chewed up in the mountains same as down here, I guess.

WOMAN. They was set on coming but it was me made it so as we could come. He couldn't have, if I hadn't managed. I thought to better things for my little daughter but I just fell sick and botched it.

MILL-WOMAN. That's what women do when they try to fix things and rule. Like me. I planned to get married so as to save my wages for myself and not have to pay them to my pap. And I just had babies one after another and had to work harder than ever and the wages slipping through my fingers into everybody's mouth. Women is just pore forlorn critters, tools in the hands of the Lord. They hadn't ought never to try to rule things. The Lord, he means them to suffer for the sin of Eve. And if they try to escape their punishment, they just make things a heap worse for theirselves.

HONEY [*timid but determined to ask the question*]. If women is punished for Eve's sin, why shouldn't men be, too?

MILL-WOMAN [*solemnly*]. It's all on account of their sect, women being women and men being men. Eve was a woman.

HONEY. Yes, but ain't men as much the children of Eve as women are?

NEIGHBOR [*laughing derisively*]. Would you listen to that now? A silly girl trying to argufy! You shut up and leave that to men and preachers.

[*There is another knock at the door and Honey goes to open it.*]

WOMAN [*nervously to the Neighbor*]. Don't you talk that way to her. She ain't used to hard talk, and she ain't trying to argufy.

MILL-GIRL [*Entering*]. Howdy. I just came to ast how your mam is.

HONEY. Oh, she's better. Come on in.

[*The Mill-Girl comes in and the others greet her. She seems subdued and quite unlike her former self-assertive, lusty self.*]

MILL-WOMAN. How are you feeling these days? You don't look well.

MILL-GIRL. I don't feel good. My back aches fit to kill me working in the mill.

NEIGHBOR [*laughing uproariously*]. Well, I reckon everybody knows what that means, you young fool. You're married now, ain't you?

HONEY [*standing in the middle of the room and looking deeply troubled*]. You mustn't call her names.

NEIGHBOR [*laughing more*]. Oh, ho, ho, you, too, to be telling I mustn't! Oh, ho, ho, ho!

MILL-WOMAN [*to the Neighbor*]. You must be feeling awful merry tonight, ain't you? Well, I'll be going. I got to get the children to bed and I'm so tired myself I just want to fall in without taking my clothes off.

MILL-GIRL. I'll be going with you, I just dropped in [*to Honey*] to ast how your mam was and I thought I'd help you with the supper dishes but I see you've got them done.

HONEY [*following the Mill-Girl to one side of the room and speaking low. The others do not seem to notice them.*] You did see the Teacher that day didn't you?

MILL-GIRL. Oh, yes, the Teacher was on my track hunting me here to your house and then to my house, making me promise not to get married for a year. I promised, but I fooled everybody, you bet. [*Laughing with stupid egotism.*] I promised all right and then I got married the very next day. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ain't I the smart one?

HONEY. You didn't lie to the Teacher? [*Horrified.*]

MILL-GIRL. Why, yes, of course I did. When people pin you down and make you promise, you got to lie.

HONEY. Have you ever seen the Teacher since?

MILL-GIRL. No. I guess it got noised round what I done and I guess I'll be let alone after this.

HONEY. Seems as if the Teacher was a hundred million miles away. But I got to get it somehow, my larning. Soon as my mammy's well again, I'm going to. I got to take care of her while she's sick and as soon as she's well again I'll have to find some way. I think I got to see the Teacher again. I know I'm going to. [*Her face lights up beautifully with the thought.*]

MILL-GIRL [*returning to the others*]. Well, I don't know as I want to see anybody ever again. I ain't hankering after nothing. I'm tired. I'm tired of living. But I did fool them all — that was some fun. [*With a silly, triumphant grin.*]

MILL-WOMAN. You done what I done, what we all done, tried to be smart and fool God, and you didn't do nothing but fool yourself. You're

just a pore critter, too, like us all, and you'll soon be thin and old. Honey, too, her time'll come. She's growed up now, she'll get thin and old, too.

MILL-GIRL. I don't know what you mean. I didn't try to fool God. And Honey's different. She's changed so lately.

[*The Neighbor turns about and looks at Honey sharply.*]

MILL-WOMAN. Folks change and get old. They change and wither as the grass withereth, so the Holy Scripture says.

NEIGHBOR [*looking about the room*]. How soon are you expecting of the old man back?

WOMAN. Oh, he mostly don't get home till late.

NEIGHBOR [*yawning*]. Well, I guess I'll be going, too. I'm kind of sleepy myself.

MILL-WOMAN. I hope you'll be feeling better in the morning.

[*They all go out, the Neighbor first without the ceremony of saying good-night, the Mill-Girl lingering.*]

MILL-GIRL. Your mam's dreadful sick, ain't she? I hope she gets well.

HONEY. Oh, yes, she's going to. [*She closes the door after them. It has been growing darker.*] I guess I'll make a light. [*She gets the little coal-oil lamp down from the shelf against the wall back of the stove, lights it and places it on the table.*]

WOMAN. The days are so long, now — about the longest in the year likely. It's light till bedtime. Be you tired, Honey?

HONEY. Oh, no, I never get tired. [*Briskly.*] I'm so strong and healthy.

WOMAN [*smiling*]. I don't guess you're telling the truth, Honey. Working in the mills makes everybody tired. [*With a sigh.*] It kills some people.

HONEY. Will you drink a cup of milk afore you go to sleep?

WOMAN. You take such good care of your old mammy, don't you, Honey? You've growed so since we come to town down from the mountains, and got to be so wise and helpful. [*Gazing at Honey long and silently.*] The Mill-Girl was right when she said as how you'd changed. You're different somehow, lambkin, since I took sick, I don't know how exactly, only I know you're older and different, somehow. It's you that takes care of your mammy now stead of mammy taking care of her little girl. Only you'll never be old and faded and thin — not you. [*After a pause.*] No, I don't want no milk, dearie, I ain't thirsty. And I don't want to go to sleep right away for a little while. All I want is just to have my little girl to talk to. I don't see much of my little girl nowadays. She just works so hard all day and when night time comes we're so tired we go to sleep right after supper.

HONEY [*talking as she shuts the doors of the safe, turns up the wick of the lamp and goes over to her mother's bed*]. I could stay up all night talking to my mammy.

WOMAN. Oh, I guess you couldn't keep your pretty blue eyes open. It's kind of hot in here, Honey. S'pose you open the door a little.

[*Honey opens the door, peers out into the night, then comes back to her mother and sits down on the side of the bed.*]

HONEY. It's a pretty night. There's a big moon, round and blue-white, and lots of stars, specially around the edge — speckling the sky.

WOMAN. It would be pretty up in the mountains tonight.

HONEY [*clasping her mother's hand and smiling delightedly*]. Oh, wouldn't it be pretty!

WOMAN. I guess the moon would be hanging up in the east over the Black Face Ridge and all across the valley it would be so bright you couldn't scarcely see the lights in the houses.

HONEY. And then in the north Great Stormy would be humping hisself, big and still and white.

WOMAN. And in the south Bald Face would be frowning, all black because he would be betwixt us and the moon.

HONEY. And Round Knob would be below us all white instead of green, and so still and smooth and looking so far away.

WOMAN. And all the big trees would stand strong and quiet and the leaves of the bushes would all shine in the moonlight and all the air would smell of laurel. Our cabin is setting there strange and lonesome. No honey-child to come and lift the latch and open the door and come out to sniff the night breeze and make birds and beasts out of the stars. Our cabin must be setting there wishful-like.

HONEY. And all the birds would be gone to sleep. Mammy, where would that little humming-bird sleep? The little green one that used

to come for the honey-suckle on the porch of our cabin?

WOMAN. Oh, I guess he's asleep in the woods. Maybe up in a big cottonwood tree.

HONEY. A cottonwood leaf would be big enough for him to wrap hisself up in round and round and round.

WOMAN. It would be awful pleasant to be asleep off in the woods. Wouldn't it, Honey? And if a person was a-going to die, it would be nice to die up in the mountains and be buried where you could hear the wind singing in the tops of the trees and the grassy branch on its way down through the ravine to the valley.

HONEY. But, mammy, what makes you talk that way? You ain't going to die. [*She turns and searches the Woman's face earnestly.*]

WOMAN. Oh, no, I ain't a-going to die, Honey, child. I was just pretending if a person *was* a-going to, it would be so nice to be where you could just hear the singing of the wind and water 'stead of the factory whistle and all the clatter on the pavement and street-cars banging and engines and all the racket of town.

HONEY. Does it hurt you, mammy?

WOMAN. Oh, no, only maybe sometimes just a little it makes me fret. If a person was a-going to die, it would be nice to be up in the mountains.

HONEY. But you ain't going to. I wouldn't let you. I'd take care of you. I *am* taking care of you. [*She takes her mother's hand and caresses it.*] I don't just know what I'd do without you.

WOMAN. I guess you'd take care of your pappy, wouldn't you, Honey?

HONEY [*hesitating for a time and stiffly*]. I guess so.

WOMAN. Honey, child, you don't seem to be toward your pappy the way you used to was. What's the matter? [*There is no answer.*] What makes you different? What's the matter?

HONEY. Nothing, mammy.

WOMAN. Yes, there is. You love your mammy, don't you, dear?

HONEY. Oh, you know I do! [*Turning to her adoringly.*]

WOMAN. Then what's the matter?

HONEY. Well, pappy don't — well, he don't work none, does he? He don't — well, he don't take much care of — well, of us, does he?

WOMAN. You mustn't notice things so, dearie. Some things can't be helped. And so you just mustn't notice. You have to make yourself think that. If I shouldn't stay with you I want you should promise me something. Honey, child, you promise me you'll take care of your pappy long as he needs you.

HONEY. Oh, mammy!

WOMAN. Won't you?

HONEY [*very hesitatingly and sighing*]. Oh, yes, mammy, I'd promise you anything. So I promise. [*After a pause.*] That would mean I couldn't get married, but I don't want to. The mill girls get married so as not to have to give their wages to their paps, but the Teacher don't want them to do that — not to get married so young. Oh, mammy, I wisht you could have

seen the Teacher. I guess it was like a angel's visit.

WOMAN. I wisht I could. I never saw a angel.

HONEY. But I got you, mammy. I don't want nothing else. [*Kissing her.*] But I wisht — ! If you could have whatever you wisht for, mammy, what would you wish?

WOMAN. Just one thing?

HONEY. Yes, just one thing.

WOMAN. To have always?

HONEY. Yes, to have always.

WOMAN. That's a awful important wish.

HONEY. Yes, it ought to take right smart of thinking.

WOMAN. Give me a little time.

HONEY. All right.

WOMAN [*after a brief pause*]. I'm ready.

HONEY. All right. Well, what do you wish for most of every thing in the whole world to have always?

WOMAN. A tombstone.

HONEY [*disappointed and starting*]. Why, I thought you'd say *me!* I thought that you'd wish to have *me* most of all to have all the rest of your life!

WOMAN. I guess I got you, Honey, for the rest of my life. I don't have to wish for that. I'm so tired it wouldn't seem worth while to wish for nothing else in this world but a tombstone and it would be so nice to have one after a person was gone. Well, what do you wish for most?

HONEY. Well, I was a-going to wish to have

you, mammy, but if that ain't in the wishing, why, then, next I would wish for a eddication.

WOMAN. Oh, my, oh! I guess that's as hard to come by as a tombstone. Seems as if you was further away from it working down here in the mills in town than you was up in the mountains. I guess you and me ain't neither of us ever going to get our wish, you pore little lamb.

HONEY. Oh, we will, mammy, we shorely will. I feel as if I must get mine, mammy. I must. Only I do wish you wouldn't never need yours. Don't you feel better tonight, dear? Don't you, please?

WOMAN. Oh, yes, I'm feeling better and better every day. And I feel so tired now as if maybe I could go right to sleep.

HONEY. Do you, dear? I am mighty sleepy, myself.

WOMAN. Are you, you pore little lamb? You just lay down here now and rest by your mammy, you little lamb — you dear little lambkin.

[*The Woman pulls the child down to her breast and in her mother's arms Honey falls asleep. Curtain to the second act.*]

ACT III

[*It is a Saturday afternoon in autumn. The cabin looks just the same as before. Summer is over and it is beginning to be chill towards sunset. The windows and door are*

closed and a poor fire is struggling in the old cook-stove. The Man sits as before in the rocking-chair, smoking. He is somewhat spruced up. He sits gazing impatiently through the window. After a moment or two he gets up, goes to the door, opens it, and stands leaning against the jamb, looking out. Mill children are seen going by, most of them pale, listless bits of humanity. The Man calls to some of them.]

MAN. Hi, there, you come in here. [*Two little white-faced girls obey him and come to the door.*] Have you seen my girl?

MILL-CHILD. No, sir, we ain't.

MAN. Go long with you, then. [*They go and he still stands watching. He calls to two others, a boy and a girl, little worn-out things, brother and sister. They come in and look curiously around.*] Have you seen my girl this afternoon?

MILL-CHILD. No, I ain't seen her.

MAN. Was she at the mill today?

MILL-CHILD. Oh, yes, sir.

MAN. Did she start home?

MILL-CHILD. I don't know. I ain't seen her.

MAN. Oh, all right. Go long with you. [*These go, too, and he stands watching a few minutes longer, then calls to two others, a boy and a girl. They come in, too.*] Did you see my girl today.

MILL-CHILD. Yes, sir.

MAN. Was she at the mill today?

MILL-CHILD. Yes, sir.

MAN. Was you all working at the mill today same as usual? From early morning on?

MILL-CHILD. Yes, sir.

MAN. Working all afternoon?

MILL-CHILD. Yes.

MAN. Did you get paid your wages same as usual?

MILL-CHILD. Yes, sir.

MAN. Did my girl get paid and start home?

MILL-CHILD. I don't know. I ain't seen her lately.

MAN. Oh, go long with you. [*With impatient gesture he pushes them out, shuts the door with a bang and goes to sit down in the rocking-chair again. After a short time Honey opens the door quietly and comes in. She wears an old black cotton dress that has evidently been cut down to fit her in some sort but very inadequately fulfills the intention. She is thinner and paler and there has come into her face a great wistfulness and sadness with a patient determination. She carries a bundle done up in an old newspaper. The Man does not look at her but speaks angrily.*]

MAN. Where you been? You don't come straight home from the mill.

HONEY. No, sir, I didn't come straight home. [*She takes off her hat and hangs it up on a nail after first carefully placing the bundle on her little bed which is there as before.*]

MAN. You got your nerve to tell me you didn't. You're plumb ornery. Since your mammy died you got to acting just as you please.

Not that you didn't do it afore, too, she spilt you so. I like to know what you mean by galivanting so.

HONEY. I wasn't long, pappy. I ain't much late and I'll get your supper for you right away.

MAN. I don't want my supper yet, I ain't hungry. You want to make me eat whenever it suits you whether I be hungry or not, so as to get it over and off your hands. What I like to know is what you mean by galivanting about so and where you been?

HONEY. I just stopped at the preacher's on my way home.

MAN. What did you do that for?

HONEY. They said as how there was a missionary box there and they was distributing of the things. So I stopped.

MAN [*with some interest*]. Did they give you anything?

HONEY. They give me what I ast for.

MAN. What did you ast for?

HONEY. Nothing much.

MAN [*thundering angrily at her*]. You tell me what you ast for.

HONEY. Nothing much.

MAN. You tell me!

HONEY. Nothing much, pappy. Just what's in that bundle. [*She is frightened but not cringing.*]

MAN. You let me see it!

HONEY. You wouldn't care nothing about it.

[*The Man gets up, laying his pipe on the table, strides over to the bed, picks up the bundle*

and carries it over to the table where he opens it awkwardly and slowly. Honey drops to her bed and sits there watching him as in the first act but with apprehension, dislike, and a brave fear in her eyes.]

MAN [*holding up the contents of the bundle which proves to be a large, white lid of an old soup tureen*]. Where's the other part?

HONEY. There wasn't no other part.

MAN. *Wasn't* none?

HONEY. No. I guess the folks that sent it forgot to put in the other part — or something — I don't know what.

MAN. You mean that folks with sense in their heads would put in a missionary box just the lid of an old thing like this? It ain't no good, nohow, it's cracked. Wouldn't they give you nothing else?

HONEY. I didn't ast for nothing else.

MAN. Well you be a plumb idjit. Why didn't you ast for something else? What did you want with this? [*Honey sits hugging her knees and looking earnestly at the lid. She does not answer. After a pause the Man says again.*] Did you hear me? What are you going to do with this?

HONEY. I ain't a-going to tell you, pappy.

MAN [*furiously*]. You ain't, ain't you? Well, I guess you be!

HONEY. No, I ain't, pappy. It don't concern you one way or tother.

MAN. You darst to spite me! I'll throw your old piece of crockery out and smash it to smithereens.

HONEY [*jumping to the table and catching up his pipe*]. If you do, pappy, I'll bust your pipe and throw it in the fire.

MAN. Don't you do that! You give me that pipe!

HONEY. Then you give me my stone.

MAN. You got some secret and you're lying to me.

HONEY. No, it ain't just to say a secret, and you know I never lied to you in my life, pappy. You can't say that about me. And, oh, pappy [*entreatingly*] the white stone ain't worth nothing to you, nohow, and what's the use just mussing up the yard with it?

MAN [*slowly laying down the lid on the table and taking the pipe from her*]. Well, I guess you're cracked same as this old thing. You need another mammy to keep you straight. You've got so you argufy with me — *you* to have the face to argufy with your pappy! You're growing up and changing, getting worse and worse, hard and mean and ornery.

HONEY. I can't never have no other mammy but my own mammy. And she's gone. [*After a pause.*] Don't you wish we could buy her a tombstone?

MAN. No. Tombstones is for rich people.

HONEY. Her grave is sinking down so if there ain't something to mark it I won't be able pretty soon to tell where it is. It's nice and green, the rains have kept the grass nice but they've sunk the earth so it's getting pretty nigh level. I wisht we could buy a tombstone for her.

MAN. It ain't right to waste money on the

dead. Money's for the living. I'm going up street a little to buy me some tobacco. You can get supper ready gainst I come back. I ain't going to be gone long. So you be spry. Where's your wages?

[*Honey pulls out an envelope from her dress and hands it to him. He takes it and opens it, counts over the money and puts it into his pocket.*]

MAN. Is this all? Ain't you never going to get a raise?

HONEY. I reckon I will some time.

MAN. You make up the fire and have supper ready gainst I get back. That old stove don't draw good, you'd ought to have fixed it — I told you afore to fix it. Now be spry.

[*He takes his hat down from the nail and goes out. When he is well out of the room, Honey dips water from the bucket into a basin and carefully washes the lid, dries it and wraps it up again in the newspaper, when the door opens rather noisily and the Neighbor walks into the room and looks about, scowling at the girl.*]

NEIGHBOR. Where's your pap?

HONEY. He just went out.

NEIGHBOR. Where'd he go to?

HONEY. Down street to get some tobacco.

NEIGHBOR. Well, I want to see him. You tell him to come over as soon as he gets home? Do you hear? [*Noticing the bundle.*] What you got there?

HONEY. Oh, just an old plaything.

NEIGHBOR. You're too big to have play-

things. You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself. Now don't you forget to tell him. [*She starts out, meeting the Mill-Woman at the door. The Mill-Woman has a doleful cheerfulness in her* "Howdy." *The Neighbor goes out, and the Mill-Woman comes in.*]

MILL-WOMAN. Howdy, Honey. I'm so tired, I liked to drop. [*She does drop into a chair.*] I come to see if you'd like I should help you cut down that other dress of your mam's. This one we fixed fits you beautiful, don't it? [*She admires Honey's unspeakable costume.*]

HONEY. I'd like to help but I'm awful tired nights now and I'm maybe going to be busy about something else.

MILL-WOMAN. How are you making out?

HONEY. Oh, I work as hard as I can.

MILL-WOMAN [*shaking her head dolefully*]. We're all forlorn critters in the hands of the Lord. I'm going to take my second kid to work Monday morning. She's nothing but a baby and can't do much. Do you miss your mammy much? [*Honey looks dumbly at her, with tears welling into her eyes.*] I reckon you do miss her. It's lonesome like when you come home at night by yourself and nobody here, ain't it? And when you get awake in the morning I reckon it's mortal lonesome. [*Honey gazes at her with eyes big with tears as if begging her to be quiet, but says nothing.*] You ain't had supper, have you?

HONEY. No, ma'am. Thank you for being so good to me. [*She tries to smile at the Mill-Woman.*] But there's only one thing in the

whole world I want now. You see I got to get it some day, somehow.

MILL-WOMAN. Get what?

HONEY. Larning. My heart's just as set on it as ever. Somehow I'm going to get it.

MILL-WOMAN. Well I don't know. I don't know much about such things. Good-by. [*She looks as if the subject were quite beyond her, and goes. Honey pokes up the stove, fills the kettle and puts it on when there is another knock at the door. She calls out* "Come in" *and the Mill-Girl enters.*]

MILL-GIRL. I just come to help you wash up the dishes and clear up but you ain't had supper yet, have you? Seems as if I always was too early or too late or something — never just on time. Never was in just the right time, never had no luck, nohow. [*Honey proceeds with her preparations for supper, getting out knives, forks, plates, etc., while the Mill-Girl goes on talking.*] I always was the unluckiest critter. Nothing I ever did come out right. I wisht I hadn't got married. A person plans to get married and save all her wages and not have to give them to her pap, but instead you'll be having babies and be sick and miserable. I wisht I hadn't never tried to do nothing. I'm always unlucky.

HONEY [*tenderly*]. I'm awful sorry for you.

MILL-GIRL. Things don't turn out good for them as plans and plans and thinks they're going to be so smart. My back aches so when I'm working in the mill seems as if I'd die. I can't

hardly stand and I have to stand all day long. I wisht I'd listened to the Teacher.

HONEY. How did you know about the Teacher?

MILL-GIRL. Oh, I heard about the school and was out there once on an errand for some summer folks at a cottage and one of the teachers got hold of me and tried to teach me reading and writing. Then, when I was a-going to get married, it got noised round and so the Teacher came and hunted me up and tried to make me promise I wouldn't. And I promised — like I told you — just to get rid of them. You can't go way from home, nohow. It's — you can't do nothing, nohow.

HONEY. I don't see how you could lie — not to the Teacher.

MILL-GIRL. You bet I could. I wisht I hadn't. But you got to lie sometimes. They got a school away out where people get eddicated, and larn to teach and do all kind of things. Maybe I could a-worked there.

HONEY. I know. I been hearing about it. I been asking about it. How far away is it?

MILL-GIRL. Oh, it's awful far away — away the other side of town and then out the road apiece up the mountain. Oh, dear, [*as she rises*] I am so tired. I aches so. Don't you never think you are going to better yourself by getting married. You ain't. You're going to worse it. You ain't a-going to help nothing by planning. It's just better to leave things go.

HONEY. I guess folks has got to do what

they want to do. Seems as if something forces them. They got to. [*The Mill-Girl looks at her wonderingly.*]

MAN. [*Entering.*] Ain't you got supper ready yet? [*He scowls at the Mill-Girl who goes out and the father and daughter are left alone together and remain silent for a few moments, he taking his customary rocking-chair, she hurrying her supper preparations.*]

HONEY. I didn't know you was in a hurry, pappy. But it won't be but a few minutes now. Just as soon as the kettle boils. You said you wasn't hungry.

MAN. I ain't, but I want to get through. I'm going out, I got business to attend to. [*He looks important. Honey glances at him surprised but says nothing. He gets up, goes to the broken mirror and carefully combs his hair and whiskers. After a little while Honey speaks.*]

HONEY. The Neighbor lady next door was here and said as how she wanted you to come over.

MAN. Umph. [*Then after a pause.*] I may as well tell you tonight, cause it's going to happen soon. I'm going to get married.

HONEY. [*Stopping stock still and gazing at him.*] But you *are* married.

MAN. No, I ain't — not by a coffinfull. When a man's wife dies he ain't married in the eyes of the law or of the Lord. Your mam's dead and buried. She's as dead as she'll ever be. And me and the woman next door is going to hitch up.

HONEY. Oh, pappy, not *her!*

MAN. Yes, of course, her. Why not? It's the best thing. Then we can all live in one house and not have to pay rent on two. And you and her children can all work together and there'll be more wages.

HONEY. Pappy, I can't live along of her!

MAN. Oh, yes, you can. You *got* to.

HONEY. No, pappy, no. I don't. I tell you how it is. I promised mammy afore she died that I'd take care of you long as you needed me, but if you get married you won't need me no longer. And if you get married to her, I won't stay with you.

MAN [*half rising as if to strike her*]. You — you darst to say that to me? You little varmint.

HONEY. If you do, pappy, if you get married, I'm going away. [*With a great calm and determination.*]

MAN [*laughing derisively*]. You go way! What good would it do you? You ain't got no money. You couldn't go nowhere where I couldn't get you.

HONEY [*talking as if to herself and in deep thought*]. I could run away and if you got me back again I could run away again and keep it up again and again and again till you got tired of it and let me go. I could get somebody — somebody good and kind — maybe there is one somewhere in the big world — to give me money to go far enough so you wouldn't never find me.

MAN. You little varmint! [*He gets up and makes for her but she eludes him. He is slow and lumbersome, she light and lissome, and as*

he follows her, she keeps the tables and chairs between them. They talk as he chases her about. He is very angry and knocks down the furniture in his effort to catch her. Breathing heavily, he makes a violent scene.] You little snake to talk that way to me! I'll teach you! You ain't going to get away from me!

HONEY. Yes, I am. I won't stay with you now. I'd get married afore I'd stay with you.

MAN. You wild-cat!

HONEY. I'm going to get my eddication at last.

MAN. You devil! I'll get you yet!

HONEY. If you get me, I'll kill myself. Do you hear — do you hear? I'll *kill* myself.

MAN. No, you won't. You wouldn't do that.

HONEY. Yes, I would. You know I always do what I say I will. You know I don't never lie.

MAN. You shut your mouth. You're going to stay right here with me and pay your wages regular every Saturday night.

HONEY. No, no, I ain't. Never. Never. Not after this. You might as well give up. My mind's made up. I'm going to run away from you.

MAN. You can't do it! You can't! You little snake!

HONEY. If I'm a snake, then I can wriggle out. And I'm going to right now. I'm going out to my mammy's grave and talk to her alone in the big moonlight. It'll come to me there. Something'll come to me there to tell me what to do. While I'm fixing her tombstone. For I'm going to take her her tombstone. She's going to have

a tombstone at last. This is her tombstone. I'm going to give her her wish. [*She catches up the lid in its newspaper wrapping from off the table adroitly and makes for the door.*]

MAN. You come back — you!

HONEY. [*As she passes out through the door.*] Maybe I'll come back — but not now.

[Curtain to Act III.]

ACT IV

[*It is Sunday morning of the next day. The room is dishevelled, the bed unmade. A coffee-pot stands on the stove, a coffee-cup, plate with bacon rinds, and other dirty dishes are on the table. The Man, as before, sits in the rocking-chair smoking. He sits there for a few moments before the door opens slowly and Honey comes in with a small bundle in a newspaper and a thin newspaper parcel. She looks very tired and worn, as if she could scarcely walk, is pale, weary, depressed. She goes to her low bed, drops down on it, casting her bundle and the little parcel from her to the bed by her side. The Man looks around at her.*]

MAN. Well, you come back. I knowed you would. You come back last night after your tantrum — I heard you come in and go to bed and it was terrible late — most morning. And then you'd gone again this morning afore I got awake. But you come back [*smiling*] — I knowed you would. I was waiting for you. I was expecting

of you. I reckon now you've come back this time to stay and settle down.

HONEY [*wearily*]. No — no — I ain't.

MAN [*turning his chair round suddenly so that he faces her, and speaking angrily*]. What? You going to try running away again? You going to try to outface me again? Well I guess you ain't. And I guess you'll get tired of that game. [*Pounding the table roughly with his fist.*] You stay right here along of me. Where was you last night?

HONEY. With mammy. [*Quietly.*]

MAN [*with a sudden start*]. What you mean? You been — you been [*rather tremblingly*] you been seeing ghosts?

HONEY. I don't know. I was with my mammy out in the graveyard.

MAN. Was she there? [*Wholly frightened.*]

HONEY. She's always there when I go out.

MAN [*in a terrified whisper*]. Did you *see* her?

HONEY. I can always see my mammy. And I talk to her and tell her all about everything.

MAN. Does *she* talk?

HONEY. No, she don't just exactly talk, but I know she hears and understands everything and so I tell her about things. I tell her, "Mammy, another of the girls in the mill has got cotton in her lungs like you did and is going to die, and another girl got married and been sick ever since, and one of the boys has got his fingers mashed in a machine." And I tell her about every new baby being born because she always loved little

babies, and I tell her when anybody dies because she was always sorry, and I tell her every scrap of news so she won't feel forgotten. And then I tell her about the things out there. Last night there was a big round moon, like the one the night she died, and lots of stars, and it wasn't cold at all — it was warm on the ground and soft in the thick grass. I fixed her tombstone for her. It ain't a very nice one but it's the best I could do.

MAN. Is that what you wanted that crockery dish-lid for?

HONEY. Yes, I don't care if you know now, because you won't bother to go out there to break it. Mammy always wanted a tombstone and now she's got one. I wisht it was nicer but it is the best I can do — yet. And I fixed it pretty in the grass and told her about it all, and as how I was going to plant her grave with violets as soon as I had time so as they would bloom next spring. And I told her about the night being so pretty, so soft and warm and bright.

MAN. [*Trying to reinstate his aplomb.*] I guess you're just making all this up. Your mam was always making up things and you're like her only worse. I guess you didn't *actually* talk to her.

HONEY [*quite sincerely*]. Oh, yes, I did.

MAN. Was you there all the time?

HONEY. Yes, I stayed with my mammy. I wasn't hungry. I stayed with her and talked to her till I didn't feel so bad. I told her all about what I was going to do, because it came to me there out on my mammy's grave what I should do — that I wasn't going to stay home no more.

But I didn't tell her what you was fixing to do, for I thought it would make her feel too sad.

MAN [*uneasily*]. Where did you go this morning?

HONEY. I went to the Teacher that's got the school. It's away the other side of town and out the road up the mountain. I started afore sunup and walked all the way — oh, it was so far. And when I got to the place the Teacher wasn't there.

MAN. Serve you right. Now you'll stay to home. And understand after this home's next door. I'm going to get married today and we're going to move right in there and I'm going to sell all this furniture. [*Waving his hand around to the poor sticks of things.*] She's got plenty. We won't be paying rent here. And you will be giving your wages to me or to her every Saturday night same as usual.

HONEY. I won't never pay my wages to her and I won't never pay them to you again. It ain't right.

MAN. Course it's right. Everybody does it.

HONEY. I don't care, it ain't right. Mammy told me there was things we couldn't help and so we mustn't notice them. She said I mustn't notice and I tried not to, but I guess she didn't know. For it ain't true — leastways, it ain't true for me.

MAN. Oh, shut up your argufying!

HONEY. It ain't right for you to be fooling yourself. That house over there ain't my home and I ain't going to stay.

MAN. What be you going to do?

HONEY. I don't know.

MAN. I guess you don't. Well, *I* do! You're going to stay right here.

HONEY. No, I won't never do that. I said I could kill myself. And I can do that if there ain't nothing else. I can do that and I will. Then I'll go lie down out there by my mammy.

MAN [*getting up with a jerk*]. I wisht you'd stop talking about her.

HONEY. I can't stop thinking about her.

MAN. You can stop talking about her — you got to. [*Combing his hair.*] You clear up in here now. I'm going next door.

HONEY. This is the last time I'm going to clear up for you, pappy.

MAN. You varmint! [*He throws down the brush in sudden anger and tries to strike her but she adroitly puts the table between them.*] You spitfire! You snake! [*He lunges at her but she evades him. He picks up the poker and tries to strike her over the head but she dodges him.*] You wild cat! I'll get you yet!

HONEY [*making a feint in one direction, then suddenly she opens the door and speaks as she goes out*]. No, you won't, not now, pappy. Not never again. [*She bangs the door behind her. The Man stops sullenly, looks chagrined and furious, but finally with a disdainful glance about the room and frowning angrily and with low growls, he puts on his hat and goes out. Almost immediately Honey slips back in again, bolts the door carefully and noiselessly behind her, goes to the bucket and takes a drink, then begins clearing away the dirty dishes. Soon there is a knock at the door.*]

HONEY [*calling low*]. Who's there? [*She listens with keen excitement and then with a look of wild hope on her face she unbolts the door and opens it watchfully, starts back and her tired blue eyes widen to sudden joy.*] Oh! The Teacher! — Oh, yes, I did go out to try to find you but you wasn't there.— Now you've come to find me and help me? — No, I didn't run away from home. I ain't going to have no home no more. My pappy's going to marry the woman next door and live there and I can't live with her — she was mean to my mammy.— Oh, yes, I know he is still my pappy, but it ain't the same.— I promised my mammy afore she died I'd take care of him long as he needed me, but now he won't need me no more, and he beats me when he can catch me, and he's going to marry her and I can't live along of her.— Oh, I got to get my larning, I got to.— If you won't have me I'll run away somewheres else — he won't care.— I can't stay here, if he gets me again I'll kill myself.— Oh, yes I will — I ain't afeared to.— Larning? — Oh, yes, I know it costs. And I'm pore. I ain't got a thing, not a thing to offer you 'cept myself. But I'll give you myself — my whole self. I'll work. I'll do anything. I'll work day and night. I'll wash and cook and sweep and scrub — I'll work at anything day and night. I'll give you every bit of my life. I'll give you *all* of *me*. Oh, please, won't you let me come? — Oh! You'll take me? — You'll take me? [*She stretches out her arms for a moment, then runs back into the room, opens the thin newspaper parcel from which she takes a faded dried rose, pins it carefully to the front of her*

queer little old black dress, gathers up her old hat and the newspaper bundle and goes out, leaving the door open behind her. Curtain to Act IV and to the play.]

THE DRESS REHEARSAL OF HAMLET

This play is more or less a little bit of history appliqued and embroidered somewhat, as history always is, in the telling. The action takes place in the late nineties of the last century. The characters dress in shirt-waists with stiff linen collars, sailor hats, belts, and so on of that day. They are giving the play of Hamlet for the benefit of the Social Settlement, the charity they are supporting.

CHARACTERS:

SUSAN, *in the part of Hamlet.*
MARTHA, *as Ophelia.*
MATILDA, *as the Queen.*
CLEMENTINE, *as Horatio.*
ETHEL, *as Laertes.*
BEATRICE, *as the Player King, Fortinbras, and any one else.*
BARBARA, *as the Ghost.*
JULIA, *as Rosencranz and Gildenstern.*
CHARLOTTE, *as Polonius.*
MARIA, *as herself and the president of the Club.*

[*The stage represents the bare dressing-room of a modest little theater that is used more frequently for lectures and concerts than for real plays. There are some plain chairs, a deal table, a very small defective mirror on the wall, a heap of stage properties in the corner,*

and a trunk containing costumes. Clementine sits in a corner quietly looking over some papers and a bank-book. Martha comes in carrying a suit-case, drops it on the floor and begins distractedly to take off her gloves and coat.]

MARTHA [*panting and with a dramatic emphasis on every other word or so*]. Has nobody come yet? Am I the *first?* I left *everything* — Father and Ruth are at Atlantic City, Letitia has the tooth-ache, Gertrude a sprained ankle, and Helen the pink-eye, and we're housecleaning, and the stove-pipe above the kitchen range came down and covered everything with bushels of soot — even the beefsteak, and the men were coming to paper the library, and the cook fell off the step-ladder and upset a bucket of dirty soap-suds into the piano, and the cat was having kittens — and I left it *all* and nearly broke my neck to get here on time so that they wouldn't be kept waiting, and here there's not a *soul* come yet! [*In the utmost despair.*] I'm *always* the first! [*She drops into a chair and fans herself with an old newspaper she picks up from the table.*]

CLEMENTINE. I suppose some one has got to be first.

MARTHA [*with determination*]. Yes, but it's not going to be *me* any longer — it's going to be some one else. I'm tired of wasting time. I'm going to turn over a new leaf. This is the case of where the *first* shall be *last.*

JULIA [*coming in, out of breath, tall and willowy and graceful, carrying a suit-case and a spear*]. Hello..

MARTHA. Hello, Julia.

JULIA [*opening an old and worn prompt-book*]. Haven't they all come yet?

MARTHA. *All?* "I'm the bosun tight and the midshipmite and the crew of the Captain's gig."

JULIA. Barbara has suddenly decided to go to Greece again.

MARTHA. Oh, law! And left us with all the greasy work to do.

JULIA. I only hope she isn't drowned.

MARTHA. Well, I suppose those that are meant for the hangman's noose don't get drowned, but the thought of Barb coasting airily round the isles of Greece in that sail-boat gives me the creeps.

JULIA [*still with her prompt-book in her hand*]. She asked me to conduct this dress rehearsal for her. She'll try to get here later.

CLEMENTINE. Is this the dress rehearsal?

MARTHA. It is the very *last* rehearsal we are going to have. Hamlet will be produced tomorrow afternoon and evening and without *any more* rehearsing in between.

JULIA. Barbara thought we could persuade them to come for another rehearsal tomorrow morning and then just sit around in their costumes till afternoon with pieces of bread and butter.

MARTHA. Pieces of eight, pieces of eight, pieces to ate you mean.

JULIA. Oh, Martha!

MARTHA. Oh, I know I'm dippy. I always become as dippy as Mr. Rochester's maniac wife when I am about to be executed in one of the College Club plays.

JULIA [*sighing*]. Barbara said she really didn't see how we could go through it without rehearsing in the morning. We don't know our parts.

MARTHA [*beginning to unfasten her shirt-waist*]. We *never* know our parts. Isn't it hot today! I'm thankful I don't have to put on padded velvet trousers like Susan. That's usually my fate. Whenever the thermometer is at ninety-five degrees in the shade and you dream of a silk tissue dress, it's then always the College Club has a play and I have to clothe my person in doublet and hose or else in chain armor and a beard. I don't know how I escaped this time and had the blessing of the filmy part of Ophelia bestowed upon me. I suppose they thought an insane part *suited* me. Delicate irony on the part of the committee.

JULIA [*with soothing dejection*]. I was just saying this morning that it seemed to me any one of us might be nearly fit for the insane asylum.

MARTHA [*hunting about for a place to hang her clothes*]. This place is the most remarkable example of economy in non-essentials. There isn't even a *peg* to hang a *thought* on.

JULIA. I feel as if there wasn't a peg [*sighing*] to hang anything on. Do you know that limerick called "My Room"? It expresses precisely my sensations in regard to the College Club.

I wish that my room had a floor,
I don't so much care for a door,
But this walking around

Without touching the ground
Is getting to be a great bore.

MARTHA. I think I could say that about Barbara. The bottom drops out of everything and she takes to a sail-boat.

MATILDA [*comes in panting and frightened, polite, and apologetic. She is carrying a suit-case, too, and a gorgeous paper crown*]. Oh, am I late? It takes so long to get in from home — an hour always — and this morning a coal-wagon broke down on the track, and after that the gates went down for a long freight train to pass — there were fifty-seven cars. When the College Club gives a play I ought to come in to the Burnet House to board. [*She shows the crown for all of them to see.*] Will this do?

JULIA. Oh, splendidly!

MATILDA. It attracted a good deal of attention on the car coming in. The people seemed to admire it. I hadn't time to wrap it up.

[*Susan and Charlotte come in carrying suit-cases and bundles.*]

SUSAN [*speaking very jovially as she drops two very large fat bundles on the floor*]. Hello, girls. Isn't it nice we're all on time!

JULIA. On time! You're three quarters of an hour late.

SUSAN. Dear me, Julia, how scath-ing. What difference does it make to you? You sound as if you were conducting this rehearsal. You sound like Barbara.

MARTHA. She *is* Barbara. She's going to take Barbara's place. Barbara is going to Greece.

SUSAN. What? Again? Barbara goes over to Greece the way the rest of us go over to Covington. Julia, are you going to take her part of Hamlet's father's ghost, too?

JULIA. No, she'll do that to-morrow — perhaps she'll get here for the end of this rehearsal.

SUSAN. Then you are still going to be Rosenstein and Gildenstix?

JULIA. Yes, I have to be both of them.

MARTHA. Well, if you're going to be a soldier you might as well be the whole army while you're at it and be done with it. Don't forget your wings. By the way, why is an army like an angel?

SUSAN. Because they both have wings.

MARTHA. Not at all. Because they both begin with A.

JULIA. Do be serious, girls. You don't seem to realise this is the dress rehearsal.

MARTHA. We realise it all too well. Permit us our swan-song.

SUSAN. Beck wouldn't send these costumes over immediately so I had to carry them myself. [*She begins to undo her two huge bundles.*]

JULIA. We can start the rehearsal right away now. We're not all here but some of us can read the other parts. We can have the scene of Polonius' death.

MARTHA. I suppose it is too late for regrets but I *do* think it is a pity we didn't choose Othello instead of Hamlet.

SUSAN. Oh, I don't approve of Othello. I don't think it ought to be presented, encouraging, as it does, mixed racial marriages.

JULIA. Anyhow, who would have been the Moor?

MARTHA. Why, you, Julia, you're just cut out for the part. [*Be it remembered that Julia is tall and willowy.*]

SUSAN. King Lear would have been my choice, inculcating, as it does, the beauty of filial devotion.

MARTHA. Why do you care about that, Susan? You haven't any children yet.

MATILDA. Why did we choose Hamlet?

MARTHA [*sarcastically*]. *We!*

CHARLOTTE. Barbara wanted Hamlet.

SUSAN. Which explains everything.

MARTHA. Barbara bosses us round like a kindergarten and we all take it. Hamlet is *so* tame. We could just as well have given Macbeth. Macbeth is much better suited to the College Club, having plenty of action. Then I could have been Lady Macbeth. I adore the sleep-walking scene.

JULIA [*admiringly*]. And you would have done it to perfection.

MARTHA. But Hamlet it had to be because it can be so easily cut and Barbara loves to cut. Barbara ought to have been a butcher.

MATILDA. It really is awfully late.

[*They scramble to get off their clothes and into their costumes.*]

JULIA. We can't wait any longer, girls. Let's have the Polonius scene.

SUSAN. Beck didn't give me the Hamlet costume after all — this is a full Falstaff suit.

MARTHA. Full Falstaff is good.

SUSAN. I haven't on my black funereal weeds yet, but odds bodkins, 'tis enough! [*With a gesture to her apparel — a negligee — pink silk petticoat, her hair down her back, etc.*] Wait a moment. I'll just get into my old gym trousers — they'll do for the melancholy Dane this time. [*She scrambles into her gym trousers and ties about one shoulder an old absurd black velvet basque by way of princely cape, which she hunts out from the costume trunk. She seizes a sword and is ready.*] Come on, thou ignominious Polonius, that I may slay thee like a rat.

JULIA. Where is Polonius?

CHARLOTTE [*singing out in a very feminine voice from a corner*]. Here I am! [*She comes out with a chemise on, carrying a very bright-colored bath-robe.*]

JULIA. Now, Queen-Mother.

MATILDA. Yes, I haven't my dress quite on yet. [*Fumbling desperately to get the hooks of a black velvet waist fastened.*] It is really too tight.

JULIA. That doesn't matter. Get back here, Polonius, this will do for the arras. [*She places a chair flat down on the floor and Polonius, getting on her bath-robe, drops on the other side.*]

CHARLOTTE. It's a good thing to have something she can see through, so she won't put my eyes out with her sword.

JULIA. Now then, come on, Queen, just let your dress go now.

MATILDA. It is really so tight I can't fasten it.

[*Susan and Matilda, with half-fastened waist, parade and act.*]

SUSAN. Now, mother, what's the matter with you? You have very badly insulted my father's memory.

MATILDA. You — you — I — [*she is embarrassed and utterly lost for her part*].

JULIA. Oh, Susan, you didn't give her her cue.

SUSAN. Didn't I? Well she ought to be glad I gave her anything.

JULIA. But don't you see, when you don't give her the right cue, it throws her entire speech out?

SUSAN. Well, I gave her the idea. I don't remember the exact words right there. Let me see the book. Here we are. [*Very dramatically.*] "Mother, you have my father much offended."

JULIA. Wait, Susan, for her speech. Go on, Queen-Mother.

MATILDA [*embarrassed and all mixed up*]. I — I — where shall I begin?

SUSAN [*with much self-possession*]. "Now, mother, what's the matter?" [*Aside.*] Get along with you now — go ahead.

MATILDA. "Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended."

SUSAN. "Mother, you have my father much offended."

MATILDA. "Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue."

SUSAN. "Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue."

MATILDA. "Why, how now, Hamlet?"

SUSAN. "What's the matter now?"

MATILDA. "Have you forgot me?"

SUSAN. "No, by the rood, not so:
You are the queen, thy husband's brother's wife;
And — would it were not so,— you are my mother."

MATILDA. "Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak."

JULIA. Oh, wait, wait!

[*They go on rapidly and withut paying any attention to her.*]

SUSAN.
"Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge,
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the innermost part of you."

[*Julia frantically tries to stop them.*]

MATILDA.
"What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho."

CHARLOTTE [*behind the arras, i.e. the chair*].
"What, ho, help, help, help."

SUSAN. "How, now, a rat. Dead, for a ducat, dead." [*Passes her sword through the chair.*]

CHARLOTTE. "Oh, I am slain. [*Gives a feminine and very artificial scream and rolls over on the floor. Julia looks utterly hopeless.*]

MATILDA. "Oh me, what hast thou done?

SUSAN. "Nay, I know not."

JULIA [*at last breaking in violently*]. I should think you didn't! Half of that was cut. Don't you remember?

MARTHA [*with a scream*]. Shades of Barbara!

SUSAN. Oh, yes, I remember now, but this

copy isn't cut. That was the trouble. You see it wasn't my fault at all. Let me see your copy. Now, then, we'll go over it again. [*Taking the book from Julia.*]

[*Beatrice comes in, hot and tired and carrying a suit-case.*]

JULIA. But, Susan, you ought to know your part.

SUSAN. Julia, I will. [*With overwrought earnestness.*] You know you can always depend upon me — I always know my part when the play is given. I promise I'll know it tomorrow. [*With a beatific smile.*]

MARTHA. Polonius screams like a debutante.

SUSAN. It's more of a groan she ought to give — chesty — you know.

JULIA. Pitch your voice just as low as you can, Polonius.

CHARLOTTE [*sitting up on the floor and singing out with sweet cheerfulness*]. All right.

JULIA. Go on, Susan.

SUSAN. "Now, mother, what's the matter?"

MATILDA. "Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended."

SUSAN. "Mother, thou hast my father much offended."

MATILDA. "Why, how now, Hamlet? Have you forgot me?"

SUSAN. "No, by the rood, not so — you shall not budge."

MATILDA. "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho.

SUSAN [*discarding her book*]. "How now? A rat. Dead for a dime, dead."

[*She passes her sword through the chair even more dramatically than before.*]

CHARLOTTE. "O, I am slain." [*She speaks in a sepulchral tone and then groans in an even deeper and more dreadful and impossible voice and rolls over on the floor in most awful writhings.*]

SUSAN. Let's go through that sword-thrust again.

CHARLOTTE. Go through the sword-thrust but don't have the sword-thrust go through me, please. Be careful.

JULIA. Let's get this chair placed exactly right.

[*Julia, Susan, Matilda, and Charlotte busy themselves arranging the chair, practising the thrust, Julia saying "This way," and so on, all of them making up business with an occasional remark, while the following conversation takes place swiftly on the other side of the stage, Beatrice, Martha and Clementine standing close together in deep earnestness.*]

BEATRICE. But, Martha, I don't see how anybody could *live* through it.

MARTHA. It was the worst case of appendicitis in history.

CLEMENTINE. A cousin of mine had the worst case of adenoids.

MARTHA. Oh, but this case is going to be written up in all the surgical journals.

CLEMENTINE. So was this case of adenoids.

There was the surgeon and his assistant and the anæsthetizer and five nurses and they were operating an hour and six minutes and removed forty-nine adenoids.

MARTHA. I don't believe it.

BEATRICE. My uncle's wife's cousin had the worst case of gall-stones ever recorded. They took out seventeen stones ranging from the size of a shirt-button to one as big as a cauliflower.

MARTHA. Think of all that being in your nose. It's a rocky road to Dublin.

BEATRICE. They weren't adenoids, Martha, they were gall-stones.

MARTHA. John's appendix must have been perforated like a hornet's nest and he never knew about it. He ate a hearty dinner Sunday.

BEATRICE. Isn't it remarkable that people almost always eat a hearty meal just before they drop dead?

MARTHA. And in an hour and a half John was on the operating table. The doctor said if it had gone sixteen seconds longer it would have been too late. He is wearing a draining-tube yet.

JULIA. *Girls,* do you think this is a dress rehearsal or a post-mortem?

SUSAN [*humming to herself and then negligently poking Charlotte with her sword*]. "I do repent me but heaven hath pleased it so." I think that went rather well. Only, Charlotte's groans sounded like the subterranean moans of a dying jelly-fish. Charlotte, couldn't you wail and groan differently? Something like this. [*Makes several attempts.*]

JULIA. Polonius can practise his groans pri-

vately and we will go on to another scene. Has Laertes come yet? Well, then if he hasn't, we can have the Hamlet-Ophelia scene.

SUSAN. Just let me have your book, Julia. Of course I know my lines for this scene, but having the book in my hand gives me a sense of confidence. [*She strides apart and Martha, shimmeringly, diaphanously, from a distant corner, comes absentmindedly forth.*] "Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia.— Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered." [*Always speaking melodramatically in her part of Hamlet.*]

MARTHA [*simpering*]. "Good my lord,
How does your honor for this many a day?"

SUSAN. "I humbly thank you; well, well, well."

MARTHA. "My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you now receive them."

SUSAN [*roughly*]. "No, not I;
I never gave you ought."

MARTHA. "My honored lord, I know right well you did
And with —"

JULIA [*breaking in*]. But that's cut! Cut it.

MARTHA. All right, spirit of Barbara, consider it cut.

"Their perfume lost
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

SUSAN. "Ha, ha, are you honest?" [*With a lunge and fierce glare at Martha.*]

MARTHA [*starting back*]. Oh, jumping catfish, Susan, you scare me into sixteen fits. If you

do it that way I'll forget all my lines. You make me feel as if I had stolen the pennies off a dead man's eyes.

JULIA. Do it over. Give her the cue, Ophelia.

MARTHA. "Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind." [*Aside.*] I'm almost tired of that line.

SUSAN. "Ha, ha, are you honest?" [*Saplessly, without any spirit utterly, swinging something,— preferably corsets — by a string.*]

JULIA. Oh, Susan, put some life into it.

SUSAN. Well, I did before.

JULIA. Twenty horse-power, yes.

[*Ethel, very short and plump, comes in carrying a suit-case and goes and sits down in a corner from where she watches the action.*]

SUSAN. I see, you want roast-beef medium — medium honest, like the rest of the world. I suppose you know it means a certain particular feminine sort of honesty?

MARTHA. Which, by the way, is the only sort of honesty the feminine mind is thought capable of — and that seldom.

JULIA. Is this a symposium of aphorisms or is it a rehearsal?

SUSAN [*going on with her part*]. "Are you fair?"

MARTHA [*turning to Julia*]. That's too mean a question to ask any one to her face in public. [*To Susan.*] "What means your lordship?" [*Always speaking with simpering affectation.*]

SUSAN. "That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty."

This and what follows seems to me a trifle — er — suggestive, as it were. Do you think the audience will understand the meaning and disapprove?

MARTHA. Oh, the *audience!* They won't know enough to understand the meaning. You can always depend on the utter ignorance of audiences.

JULIA [*sighing deeply*]. There is no use to discuss it — that part was all cut out. Do you suppose Barb would leave it in? You have the wrong book again. [*To Susan.*]

SUSAN [*skirmishing for the right book and then she goes on with great emotion*]. "I loved you once."

MARTHA. "Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so."

[*While the following scene proceeds, Matilda is at one side mumbling her part, Beatrice strides up and down on the other side more than audibly mumbling her part, and Charlotte writhes on the floor, trying different varieties of groans which may the more appropriately represent the sufferings of the expiring Polonius.*]

SUSAN. "I loved you not."

MARTHA. "I was the more deceived."

SUSAN. "Get thee to a nunnery. Ha,"— Is that all cut about breeders?

MARTHA. Certainly — it isn't wellbred.

SUSAN. "I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious.— We are arrant knaves all. Believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery." [*Suddenly.*] "Where's your father?"

MARTHA [*taken by surprise and speaking in her natural voice*]. At Atlantic City. [*Stammering.*] I mean — [*With simpering unction again.*] "At home, my lord."

SUSAN. "Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool no more but in's own house. Farewell."

MARTHA. "O heavenly powers restore him."

SUSAN. "I have heard of your paintings, too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another; you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.— Get thee to a nunnery, go."

MARTHA. "To have seen what I have seen."

SUSAN. To have heard what I have *heard!* Good Polonius, won't you be considerate enough to go out and practise dying on the sidewalk? The sounds of your dissolution do somewhat mar my eloquence.

CHARLOTTE. I'd like to know how it sounds now.

MARTHA. Sounds like a mortuary chapel.

SUSAN. Oh, it's all right. Just remember you're a doddering old man.

JULIA. Oh, goodness, no, Charlotte, don't be the customary old man of the stage.

SUSAN. That's safest. That's what she better try to be.

MARTHA. Oh, no, not the stereotyped shuffling stage octogeranium.

CHARLOTTE. Well, you're hard to please. First you don't want me to be a debutante and then you criticise me for being an octogeranium.

JULIA. Now let's have the Hamlet-Laertes scene.

CHARLOTTE [*dropping dejectedly into a chair*]. When you fuss so, I don't see how you can expect anybody to know what to do.

[*Ethel comes forth in her ordinary street clothes, with no attempt at costume.*]

JULIA. Are you Laertes?

ETHEL. Yes. I should have preferred to play Ophelia. It is better suited to me, but I suppose they needed some one who could manage a sword for the Laertes part.

JULIA. But you haven't on your armor?

ETHEL. It's too hot to wear armor today.

JULIA. But you'll have to wear it tomorrow.

ETHEL [*with quiet but completely firm determination*]. I'm not going to wear it today.

MARTHA. Sufficient unto the day is the armor thereof.

JULIA. But I think you ought to wear it at the dress rehearsal in order to become accustomed to it.

ETHEL. If I wore it every day for a week up and down in the Auburn Avenue car I wouldn't become accustomed to it. Did you ever wear chain armor?

JULIA. No, I never did. But don't you think it takes away a little from the verisimilitude of the scene not to wear just a little something — just a helmet, for instance?

ETHEL. I tell you I am not going to put it on today. I can act just as well in these clothes. If you want to have the scene, you'd better begin. I shall not wear armor today.

[*Martha and Beatrice have been trying to see themselves in the little mirror.*]

MARTHA. Is this the only mirror we are going to have? Are we all expected to dress by this thing — about as big as a postage stamp? We have to dress all huddled up in here and with *nothing* to see ourselves in but this thing. It distorts your countenance in the weirdest way. If I looked into it I literally wouldn't have the *face* to go on the stage afterwards. I don't pretend to be a stage beauty but I know my nose doesn't wander over to my left ear the way it does in this thing.

JULIA [*looking carefully at her book*]. This scene calls for almost every one on the stage. Oh, who is the King?

MARTHA. Why are we rehearsing in this dressing-room, anyway, instead of on the stage?

JULIA. Oh, didn't you know? They are having a Christian Science lecture as usual on the stage. Who is the King?

CHORUS. Hester Smith. She isn't here.

JULIA. Clementine, will you read her part?

CLEMENTINE. But I am Horatio.

JULIA. Oh, well, you just read both parts today, will you?

MARTHA. Another case of dual personality. We are frequently compelled to assume the rôle of dual personality in the College Club.

JULIA. Yes. I am both Rosencranz and Gildenstern.

MARTHA. Those names sound so Hebraic, Julia. You're a regiment of Jews, is what you

are. In your presence I feel almost as if I were in an Avondale car.

JULIA. And who is Osric?

CHORUS. Molly Adams is. She is Osric and the Player-queen, too.

JULIA. I'll just read her parts. The Attendants-with-Foils is Alice Kendall and she isn't here. Clementine, will you act as the Attendants-with-Foils for the moment?

[*Clementine drops all her papers and comes out.*]

BEATRICE. Who is going to make us up?

CHARLOTTE. Maria, I suppose. She always does.

MARTHA. Oh, mercy, when *she* makes you up, you are warranted to last a year. Not cold cream, nor soap, nor turpentine, nor gasoline, nor *anything* can get the rouge off your face and it makes your skin so sore, too. She uses that awful paste stuff and she is so stubborn she won't get the liquid rouge because it costs more, though I'm willing to pay for it myself. The last time she did it I was ashamed to teach my Sunday-school class the next day. Isn't there anybody else we can get to do it for us?

JULIA. Yes, there is, of course. But you may as well make up your minds to her. She *will* do it. She won't let anybody else. Now come on, and have the duel.

[*They all take their places for the scene. Susan is tall and plump, Ethel short and plump.*]

SUSAN [*to Ethel*]. "Give me your pardon, sir; I've done you wrong,

But pardon't, as you are a gentleman."

ETHEL. "I am satisfied in nature,
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it."

JULIA. Now the King's speech.

BEATRICE [*fumbling to find the part. Some one shows it to her*]. "Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?"

SUSAN. "Very well, my lord."

ETHEL [*picking up a sword*]. "This is too heavy, let me see another?"

SUSAN. "This likes me well. These foils are all one length?"

ETHEL. These swords appear to me to be Civil War swords. We oughtn't to use anything but the foils of Shakespeare's time.

JULIA. Well, we can't help it — we haven't anything else.

ETHEL. But we ought to have.

JULIA [*almost losing her temper*]. We can't have what we haven't got.

ETHEL. Some one ought to get the proper foils. The College Club ought not to perpetrate an anachronism.

MARTHA [*singing out*]. The College Club is an anachronism. It plays to work.

ETHEL. Whoever brought these swords ought to be made to take them back and bring foils. Who has charge of the weapons?

JULIA. Alice Kendall has charge of the weapons.

MARTHA. Try making Alice take back anything. Alice and you for it, Ethel.

ETHEL [*paying no attention to Martha*]. Then let her be sent for. And let her bring the foils with her.

MARTHA. That sounds simple enough.

SUSAN. Oh, come on with the rehearsal now. You and Alice can settle the weapons between you later.

JULIA. We are delaying the rehearsal so.

ETHEL. We must have the foils.

JULIA. But don't you see? We can't have them.

ETHEL. We ought to have the foils. [*Unmoved.*]

JULIA [*at her wit's end*]. Can't any one persuade her to go on?

MARTHA. Oh, Ethel, do have your fight and get it over. My mad scene has to be rehearsed.

ETHEL. But they are Civil War swords and it is quite wrong to use them.

SUSAN. Come on, General Grant, General Lee awaits you. [*With a flourish of her sword.*]

ETHEL. Well, I may fight with it today, but I give you all fair warning I will not fight with a Civil War sword in Hamlet tomorrow.

BEATRICE. "Come, begin;
And you, the judges, bare a wary eye."

SUSAN. "Come on, sir."

ETHEL. "Come, my lord."

SUSAN. "One."

ETHEL. "No."

SUSAN. "Judgment."

[*As they fight Susan tries to look at her book, too. The swords are too heavy for them. They plunge about, getting overheated and*

scant of breath. Be it remembered that they are both ladies, Susan tall and plump, Ethel short and plump. Ethel much in earnest, determined, fiery, finally takes her sword in both hands and goes for her opponent as if with a ball-bat. Susan tries to avoid her. This may continue as long and as violently as desired.]

ETHEL. "A touch, a touch, I do confess."

BEATRICE. "Our son shall win."

JULIA [*prodding Matilda*]. Go on, Queen, take the cue quickly.

MATILDA. Oh, dear me. Of course, for the moment I forgot. "He's fat and scant of breath."

SUSAN. Never was truer word spoken.

JULIA. Susan, don't put in your own remarks — it upsets the girls so.

SUSAN [*breathlessly*]. Well, *I'm* upset.

ETHEL. "My lord, I'll hit him now."

SUSAN. Ethel, would you mind not being quite so bloodthirsty?

[*They fight again, Ethel making desperate lunges at Susan who evades her with rather terror-stricken difficulty. Barbara slips in and quietly clothes herself in a sheet over her street apparel, the while she watches from her corner the scene enacted.*]

SUSAN [*with patronizing superiority*]. "You but dally;
I pray you pass with your best violence;
I am afraid you make a wanton of me."

ETHEL [*with great vehemence*]. "Say you so? Come on."

JULIA [*breaking in*]. Now you change swords, you know. Don't forget that.

SUSAN. Of course not.

[*In doing this, each in the most matter-of-fact way lays down her sword on the floor and picks up the sword of the other. They fight again. Hamlet is wounded and falls. Laertes is wounded and falls. The Queen swoons.*]

MATILDA. "The drink, the drink. I am poisoned."

ETHEL. "The king's to blame."

SUSAN. "The point envenomed, too. Then venom to thy work." [*Kills the King.*]

[*The King, the Queen, Hamlet, and Laertes writhe about with groanings, moanings, shriekings, and in a few moments, as they lie strewn about the floor, Maria enters, striding among and over their dead bodies.*]

MARIA. Are you all through with the rehearsal?

ALL. *Through?* [*They groan.*]

MARIA. I don't suppose you realize you're making a perfectly awful row in here. Are you aware there is a Christian Science lecture going on just out there on the stage?

MARTHA. Oh, they won't notice. They don't believe in noise.

MARIA. It's lucky for them they don't. Well, I'm sorry your rehearsal isn't over because I shall have to stop it in order to have a business meeting.

ALL. A business meeting? Now? We can't. This is the dress rehearsal.

MARIA. Well, you've got to stop your rehearsing long enough to have the business meeting.

ALL. What for?

MARIA. Didn't Clementine tell you? We haven't money enough to pay the rent.

BEATRICE. We can't stop so important a thing as a rehearsal merely for money.

MARIA. Dr. Haile will put the Sloyd System out on the sidewalk tomorrow if we haven't a check for him.

SUSAN. Will a check check him?

MARTHA. Of course. That's why they are called checks.

ETHEL. We can't have a meeting unless it is announced previously and regular notices sent out. It's not parliamentary.

MARIA. You will find in the by-laws that the president has the power to call a meeting any time at her own discretion.

BARBARA. But what if she hasn't any discretion?

ETHEL. A meeting called at the discretion of a person who hasn't any discretion would be unparliamentary and any business transacted thereat would be illegal.

MARIA [*sitting on the edge of the table*]. The meeting will please come to order.

MARTHA. Oh, well, if you want to have a meeting, you'll have it whether it suits the rest of us or not. We might as well make up our minds to it. But if Hamlet is a fizzle tomorrow it will all be your fault.

MARIA. If there are no objections we will

omit the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting.

SUSAN. Maria, why do you omit the minutes so often?

MARTHA [*aside*]. Because we take no note of time.

MARIA. Will Miss Hildebrand kindly address the chair in the usual formula of Madam President?

SUSAN. What's the matter with you, Maria? Did you forget to take your digestive tablet this morning?

MARTHA. Besides, you're not on a chair, you're on a table. [*To the others.*] She ought to be tabled, then we'd be rid of her till we wanted to *take her off* ourselves.

SUSAN. We sometimes do take off ourselves.

MARIA [*paying no attention to them*]. Miss Boland, will you kindly tell them the condition of the treasury?

CLEMENTINE. There is twenty-three cents in the treasury and the rent is due — sixty dollars — and there are a great many outstanding bills — shall I read them?

MARTHA [*with a groan*]. I move we omit the reading of the bills.

CLEMENTINE. And the residents at the Settlement haven't even a penny to buy their provisions with for tomorrow.

MARTHA. Why can't they live exclusively on bananas for a while? The Head-worker says that bananas are so cheap and so nourishing and that they can easily live on them. Why don't you just go and buy them a few dozen bananas?

MARIA [*with very intentional and biting sternness*]. Do you wish to put that into the form of a motion, Miss Godfrey?

SUSAN [*to Martha*]. Now are you sufficiently squelched?

MARIA. If not, has any one any suggestions to make?

BEATRICE. Aren't we going to make a lot of money from this play?

MARTHA. Amateurs *always* make a fortune out of a play. Your friends are helpless. They have to buy tickets. People can pretend to be sick and refuse an invitation to a party, but they have to buy tickets to an amateur performance or else bear the stigma of being poverty-stricken.

MARIA. We will make money, but you can't count even guinea pigs before they're hatched.

BARBARA. We made seven hundred dollars from Ralph Roister Doister.

SUSAN. We made sixty dollars from our last valentine sale.

CLEMENTINE. But that was all eaten up in three days.

MARTHA. At that rate the Settlement people eat up about a hundred valentines a day.

MATILDA. How much do you count on from Hamlet?

MARIA. We ought to make a thousand dollars. We'll clear a hundred from the programs alone. The advertisements are all in rhyme, calculated to keep the audience quietly reading so that they won't fuss if the curtain doesn't go up on time. One old gentleman didn't want his in verse and I told him if he didn't like to be in

poetry he could stay out altogether — he signed for a half page. Think of hesitating to advertise your safety razors in Clementine's lyric numbers.

SUSAN. Well, if it's immediate money we must have, my shoes will have to be sacrificed. I have been dreaming of a pair of green shoes to go with my new green evening gown, but here are the greenbacks for the bananas instead.

BARBARA. I meant to buy beads for beadbags in Italy — but here's the money.

MARTHA [*pulling out her purse*]. Here go my coveted silk stockings.

CHARLOTTE. I'll send you my check tonight — a week off my summer trip.

BEATRICE. I'll send you a check tonight — but don't let the Orchestra people know about it.

ETHEL. I meant to buy foils, but there is the money and I'll fight with a Civil War sword tomorrow if necessary.

BARBARA. Now don't you think you can get enough pledges without delaying the rehearsal any longer? Clementine can collect them.

MARIA. Yes. Will some one make a motion to adjourn?

SUSAN. I move we adjourn. You are so parliamentary, Maria, but we'll do anything to get rid of you.

MARTHA. I second the motion.

MARIA. All in favor of adjournment, please say "aye."

CHORUS. Aye.

MARIA. Contrary, "no." The motion is carried. [*She goes.*]

MARTHA. Well, thank goodness, we're rid of her till she comes back with her determination and her rouge to make us up. Now let's rehearse my mad scene.

ETHEL. No, we will practice the fight again. We ought to go over that five or six times.

SUSAN. You haven't heard me give my soliloquy yet. I'll do that now.

BARBARA. Oh, no, we must have the ghost scene.

CHARLOTTE. I want my death scene again.

BEATRICE. You haven't rehearsed me at all.

CLEMENTINE. Nor me, except in other people's parts.

MARTHA. My mad scene is the most important. I'll do it now.

SUSAN. You must listen to my soliloquy.

ETHEL [*high-pitched and shrill*]. Come on, let's have the fight again. [*They all clamor to be heard and make utter confusion of the stage.*]

JULIA [*In despair and putting on her hat*]. I'm going home. [*They all exclaim,* "What?" "Not yet," "You're not going to leave us?" etc.] My head aches so awfully. The rehearsal is over as far as I am concerned. [*She goes. They are all in consternation.*]

MARTHA. Well, I suppose we may as well all go.

[CURTAIN]

THE PIONEERS

The scene of this play is the first settlement of what is now a great city of the Middle-West. The time is about 1791. In writing the play I have introduced characters and described things as I liked to imagine them. If in the exigencies of presentation some of these seem difficult, alterations are easy. For instance, if a larger cast is desired, more pioneers and Indians may be added; if a smaller one, several of the parts may be doubled or omitted entirely. I have made it flexible in that respect purposely. The play has two scenes. The one in the Indian camp may be made possible for amateurs to give by hanging green curtains just inside the other scene. If this seems not to be managed, the act may be made to take place with comparatively little change also inside the pioneer's cabin — that is there need be no change of scene. Naturally I do not expect the brook to be or even to be heard on the stage but have described it for the benefit of the actor's imagination. Additions or changes are altogether permissible. For, in my experience with amateur stagecraft, I have found not only that circumstances alter cases but that cases must alter circumstances and that every one alters plays.

CHARACTERS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE:

PIONEERS	INDIANS
ALISON CARMICHAEL.	WHITE FEATHER.
ABAGAIL CARMICHAEL, *her sister-in-law.*	THE BEAVER.
EDWARD, SARAH, LITTLE NANY, *the Carmichael children.*	GREY CLOUD.
	RED FOX.
	THE EAGLE.

EUNICE MORTON.
ARTHUR, LUCY, *the Morton children.*
GEOFFREY BAXTER, *brother to Eunice.*
JOHN MORTON, *her husband.*
WILLIAM CARMICHAEL, *husband to Abagail, brother to Alison.*
MRS. WORTHINGTON. MRS. KING.
THE GENERAL.

ACT I

[*It is late afternoon on the thirteenth of February. The scene is the interior of a pioneer's log cabin. On one side of the room — in stage directions the right — there is a big open wood fire-place. At the side of this toward the front is the door opening into another room. On the other side of the room is a window towards the front, behind that against the wall a rude bed and near it a baby's crib. At the back there is a door not quite in the center but nearer the side where the bed stands; at the side of the door and towards the fire-place there is a window. A settee is in the corner between*

the window and the fire-place, a spinning-wheel and chair on the other side of the window rather in front of it. A deal table and some rude chairs compose the rest of the furniture. Some guns, kitchen utensils, and strings of drying herbs — red peppers, hops, and so on — hang on the walls. There are holes — closed now — in the outer door and window shutters for the insertion of guns. Over the door into the inner room a ladder goes up to the loft above. A pretty girl of eighteen or so sits by the wheel and spins, humming a little tune to herself.]

ABAGAIL [*from within in a mournful complaining voice*]. If the spring doesn't come soon the children's bare feet will be upon the snow-covered ground.

ALISON [*smiling and answering in a gay and very sweet voice*]. Oh, when their shoes wear out they can wear moccasins.

ABAGAIL [*coming from the inner room with her knitting of coarse grey yarn in her hand*]. It is not so much their shoes as their stockings that are worn out. I've darned and darned till they won't hold the stitches any longer. There is scarcely enough yarn left for another pair and that is the last of the wool. [*Sighing, with a glance at the spinning-wheel.*]

ALISON [*hopefully*]. I think the spring will come soon. If it doesn't [*laughing*] we will have to tie their legs up in hay till they can go barefoot.

ABAGAIL. They are not your children, Alison, or you would not jest about it.

ALISON. Oh, you know I love them, Abagail.

ABAGAIL. You take this hard, frontier life as a joke but I am accustomed to the greatest luxuries and all the delicacies of aristocratic society in Trenton.

ALISON. Oh, sister, I left as many pleasant things in Philadelphia as you did in Trenton, of your beloved Jersey. But I am willing to give them all up for this wonderful new land. It has been a long cold winter but for that very reason I think the spring will be early. There are signs. Yesterday I heard a robin.

ABAGAIL [*sitting down by the table and knitting*]. More like it was an Indian. William says they imitate birds for signals. Maybe they are up to some of their devilish tricks.

ALISON [*smiling and shaking her head*]. No, it was no Indian though his breast was red. I saw him. The color was gay against the snowy branch where he sat.

ABAGAIL. Yet I do not think he had come for good. William says they fly up from the south and if it be cold they go back and stay.

ALISON. Will says a great many unpleasant things. This little robin is the advance guard sent by his clan to reconnoiter. He sang to me and said he felt the tingling sweetness of spring in the air despite the snow, and that he would go back to tell the others and they would at once make ready for their journey.

ABAGAIL [*smiling forlornly*]. I can not feel as you do. I am depressed by this rough life.

SARAH [*from within*]. Mother, we can't do these problems Aunt Alison gave us.

ALISON. Work at them a little longer.

EDWARD [*coming out, followed by Sarah*]. But they are too hard.

ALISON [*to Edward*]. Read yours over carefully and you will see how to do it.

EDWARD [*reading from his slate. Both children have slates*]. "If it takes an ounce of meal to make a little hoe-cake, and a boy eats six little hoe-cakes for breakfast, dinner, and supper, how long will it take him to eat up a bushel of meal?" It's too hard, and besides no boy would eat nothing else but hoe-cakes.

ALISON. Suppose he had nothing else to eat?

EDWARD [*grinning*]. His father would go out and shoot wild turkey.

ALISON. Suppose his father didn't dare go far enough to get wild turkeys because the Indians were on the war-path?

EDWARD. Then the boy would eat some of his sister's apples. Ask *her* for *her* puzzle.

SARAH [*reading*]. "If each blossom in the spring means an apple in the fall and there are three trees, one with a thousand pink and white blossoms, one with two thousand, and one with three thousand, how many red apples will there be in October?" I am going out to see if the little new apple trees have any blossoms coming.

EDWARD. I'm going out to play.

ABAGAIL. No, no. I am afraid to have you go.

[*There is a knock at the door, Abagail looks frightened, Alison stops her wheel and goes to answer the knock.*]

ALISON [*calling out*]. Who is there?

EUNICE [*from without*]. Oh, it is I, Alison. Open up, I'm not an Indian.

[*Alison laughs, unbolts the door, swings it wide, and in walks the neighbor, Eunice Morton, a pleasant, jolly soul, with her two children, Arthur and Lucy.*]

ALISON. I didn't think you were an Indian, but sister Abagail is so timid we always ask who's there before opening, to satisfy her.

ABAGAIL. It is best to be on the safe side.

ALISON [*laughing*]. Of the door.

EUNICE [*to Abagail*]. You are so sure of Indians, they will come and get you some day.

ALISON. Sit here. [*She pulls up her chair to the fire, Eunice takes it, Alison herself balances on the edge of the table, for a few moments, gracefully swinging her foot.*]

ABAGAIL. I do fully expect them. I would not be surprised nor unprepared.

ALISON. Oh, dear. I should be surprised and scared out of my wits.

EUNICE. The ones who think they will be frightened are the ones who will be brave. [*To the children who are sidling about, talking to each other, half embarrassed.*] You children run outdoors and play.

ABAGAIL. No, no. I am afraid to have them outside alone. I fear Indians and snakes and animals. I can't bear to see them out of my sight.

EUNICE [*laughing*]. You see too much out of your sight! Don't imagine unpleasant things for fear they'll come. Run along, children.

ABAGAIL. For a little, then. But if anything happens, come right in.

[*The children go out.*]

EUNICE. You'll make them cowardly, Abagail. Where are the others?

ABAGAIL. Little Alison and the baby are asleep in there. [*Pointing to the inner room. She sighs.*]

EUNICE. Abagail, why do you torment yourself so always with the thought of Indians? A mouse doesn't sit down and repine all day about the cat that may eat it up. Perhaps the cat won't come. If it is in my stars to be scalped by Indians, I shall be scalped and it can't be helped. I am not going to make myself miserable thinking about how it will feel. Sometimes I almost believe fear will bring Indians.

ALISON. More like the white man's bad treatment of them will bring them.

EUNICE. In either case worry doesn't help.

ABAGAIL. Oh, you are very brave, Eunice, but I am not so blessed. The Lord has not made me valiant.

EUNICE. Well, Abagail, I do think if you didn't leave so much to the Lord and tried to help yourself a little, you would be much more comfortable.

ABAGAIL. But our house is so far away from the rest of the settlement, and there is the creek between. William preferred this land over here — it wasn't *my* choice.

ALISON. The gardens and orchard are starting excellent well.

ABAGAIL. We could all be scalped over here and the rest of the settlement none the wiser. Especially in winter.

EUNICE. Well, winter is nearly over. It is getting much warmer, real St. Valentine's weather and thawing fast. The ice in the creek will be gone by morning.

ALISON. Oh, then the ice in the river must have broken and the boats from above will be coming soon with supplies.

EUNICE. We are almost in dire need of supplies. I understood a messenger was dispatched from the fort yesterday to Mr. Armatage begging him to hasten them as fast as possible.

ABAGAIL [*sighing*]. I do wish we were not so far from the fort.

EUNICE. Why don't you wish you were back in Jersey? But I am forgetting my errand. We are going to kill our pigs tomorrow and I came to ask if we might borrow your big kettle?

ABAGAIL. Yes, and welcome. I hear your pigs are very fine and fat.

EUNICE. We fed them on beech and hickory nuts the children gathered in the fall. I must be going. [*She rises, goes to the door and calls the children who all come trooping in.*]

ARTHUR. You have spoiled our game. The boys were just going to scalp the girls.

EUNICE. It's well I interrupted them — just in the nick of time to save the girls' lives. I'll send over for the kettle later. Perhaps my brother Geoffrey will like to come to carry it. [*With a laughing glance at Alison.*]

ALISON. Perhaps he would not, Mistress Eunice, like to carry a great heavy iron kettle.

EUNICE. Oh, a light heart makes a light kettle. Oh, fie, Mistress Alison Carmichael, I know

very well why he is always finding an excuse to cross the creek. [*Alison makes a little face at her, smiling.*] Come along with me a little way. [*To Abagail.*]

ABAGAIL. I am afraid.

EDWARD. Can't we go, too?

LUCY. Oh, yes, please, can't we?

EUNICE. Yes, all of you.

[*They say good-by and are about to go out.*]

ALISON. Come over this evening and I'll have some apples and nuts, maybe popcorn and cider.

EUNICE. Very well, we'll come. Shall I bring Geoffrey and Geoffrey's fiddle?

[*Abagail opens the door, the children rush out, Eunice is just going through, when she exclaims.*]

EUNICE. Well, well, well, well! Where did you come from? [*To Abagail and Alison.*] Here are two visitors. [*The two men, John Morton and Geoffrey Baxter, her husband and brother, enter jovially and greet Abagail and Alison.*] Wasn't there men's work for you two to do without your coming visiting in the afternoon like women?

JOHN. No, dear wife, we felt drawn to follow you.

EUNICE. Keep your compliments, John, for those that will swallow them.

JOHN. Well, then, to tell the truth, I came to borrow and bring home the Carmichaels' big iron kettle and Geoffrey, knowing how weak my arms are, felt he must come along to help me carry it. [*With a grin.*]

GEOFFREY [*half blushing*]. I was just start-

ing out to see if I could find a squirrel and thought I might as well come this way with him.

EUNICE. Well, get along, then. For I am just starting for home.

ABAGAIL. The kettle is outside behind the house.

JOHN. We'll find it there then. [*He starts out.*]

EUNICE. I'm glad you came. We'll all go home together. [*She goes out and Abagail follows her.*]

GEOFFREY. If I get a squirrel, sweetheart, may I bring it back to you?

ALISON. If you are in truth after a squirrel, Geof, you'd better be off at once, for the dark will fall fast and it will be grey in the woods.

GEOFFREY. Then I'll be coming back this way with it.

ALISON. Oh, you can bring it over tonight, if you like. I think they are all coming over to spend the evening with us. Now be off with you, sir.

GEOFFREY [*trying to kiss her, but she evades him*]. Good-by, sweetheart. [*Alison follows him to the door, stands there a few moments, comes in, leaving the door open, goes to the fire where she warms her hands a little while and then is about to place a log on the fire when a young Indian suddenly and in absolute silence appears at the door. He stands stock-still watching her and Alison as if by intuition turns about and sees him. She is startled into dropping the log of wood but otherwise shows no trepidation.*]

WHITE FEATHER. How!

ALISON. How!

WHITE FEATHER [*they take plenty of time between their speeches, the Indian for lack of nerves and possessing a large mental leisure, Alison because of her unseen kinship to him*]. Me come to see Chief Carmichael.

ALISON. He is not at home. Perhaps he will be back soon. Won't you come in?

WHITE FEATHER. See him. Trade.

ALISON. Are there others with you?

WHITE FEATHER [*standing perfectly still in the doorway*]. No.

ALISON. Won't you come in?

[*The Indian stands silent a few moments, then enters and takes the chair Alison places for him before the fire. She stands. He is tall and handsome, a splendid young brave, and his movements are all quick, adroit, graceful.*]

WHITE FEATHER. Cold.

ALISON [*closing the door*]. It is.

WHITE FEATHER. Me no cold — young white squaw. [*He does not look at her, keeping his eyes on the fire.*]

ALISON. Mr. Carmichael will be back any moment, but perhaps I can tell you what you want to know.

WHITE FEATHER. Indians want meal. Trade skins.

ALISON. Oh, there is so little meal left in the settlement. It has been such a cold, hard winter. Haven't your people felt it?

WHITE FEATHER. Indians hungry. No meal.

ALISON. No meal at all?

WHITE FEATHER. No meal.

ALISON. Oh, I am so sorry.

WHITE FEATHER. Indians hunt. Eat game. No meal. Plenty skins. No meal. Indians all hungry — some sick — some dead.

ALISON [*exclaiming*]. Oh! [*taking a step toward him.*] I know Mr. Carmichael will do all he possibly can for you. I am so sorry. I would help you if I could.

WHITE FEATHER [*looking at her directly for the first time*]. Indians no hurt young white squaw.

[*The door opens and William and Abagail Carmichael and their children enter. At sight of the Indian Abagail gives a scream and hurries the children into the other room.*]

WILLIAM [*a raw-boned and severe young pioneer*]. How, chief!

WHITE FEATHER. How!

ALISON. Brother, he has come to see if he can effect a trade with you. The Indians are greatly in need of meal. He says they have furs they want to give you for meal.

WILLIAM [*grimly*]. He's brought his pigs to a poor market.

WHITE FEATHER. Indians no meal. Hungry. Sick. Starving. Indians have plenty furs. Good furs. Mink, beaver, otter, good furs.

WILLIAM [*roughly*]. I don't want any of your furs.

WHITE FEATHER [*insinuatingly*]. Good furs! Fine!

WILLIAM. I can't help it how good they are, I don't want 'em. We've little enough grain.

We've got to keep it all to last the season through. I can't spare any to you.

ALISON. Oh, Will, give him some if you possibly can. Some of his people are sick and dying for want of food.

WILLIAM. That's like enough, but it's not my fault. [*To the Indian.*] Why didn't you go to the fort to trade?

WHITE FEATHER. No good. Big chief there say "yes" one day, say "no" another day. No keep word with Indians. In summer promise meal, in winter no trade. Chief Carmichael good man. In summer he promise meal to Indians. He keep word. Indians like him.

WILLIAM [*uneasily*]. Oh, they do, do they? Well, I've always tried to deal fairly with them, but I can't let them have any meal now.

WHITE FEATHER. Last summer Chief Carmichael promise meal.

WILLIAM. I can't help it if I did. There's not enough.

ALISON. Oh, Willie, give him a little. Give him my share.

WILLIAM. No, I'll not. You go back to your people and tell them what the big chief at the fort said is true and that he is a good chief. Tell them I have no meal for them. Your people better plant enough corn this year to last the winter out. You ought to learn your lesson.

[*White Feather rises and walks with dignity to the door. Alison looks much distressed.*]

WHITE FEATHER. Me tell.

ALISON. Brother, at least ask him to stay for supper.

WILLIAM [*condescendingly*]. Why yes, chief, won't you stay and eat with us?

WHITE FEATHER. No, Indians waiting. Me no stay.

ALISON [*detaining him*]. We would be so glad to have you stay and share our food with us, chief.

WHITE FEATHER. Me go.

ALISON. Good-by, then. [*She impulsively offers him her hand. He takes it, looking at her intently, and then with dignity walks out. William closes the door after him, bolts it and then places his gun which he has kept all the while on his arm, in a corner.*]

WILLIAM. You can't do anything with those people. They're shiftless. You can't help them.

ALISON. I think you can.

WILLIAM. They're all a pack of scoundrels.

ABAGAIL [*coming in with all the children, carrying the baby, and with little Alison holding to her dress*]. The redskins are all like devils. I am so afraid they will come and wreak their vengeance on us now. Alison, why did you let him in? Why did you allow him to enter?

ALISON. The door was open and he walked in. I didn't let him. He didn't ask to be allowed. [*Laughing.*] I suppose he never dreamed he wasn't welcome. I think he understands we can't spare the meal, but whether he will be able to make the other Indians understand when he tells them of brother William's refusal — I don't know.

WILLIAM. Oh, don't bother your head about it. He was probably lying all the time. And

they're always begging. We're well rid of him. I'm as hungry as a bear. How soon will supper be ready?

ABAGAIL. In my fright I totally forgot supper.

ALISON [*bustling about and taking down a pan*]. It won't take long.

[*The curtain falls. End of Act I.*]

ACT II

[*It is evening of the same day and in the same room. The family have just had their supper. A roaring fire is burning in the fireplace and candles are lighted. William Carmichael is cleaning his gun, his wife is putting the baby to bed in its crib, Alison is just finishing washing the dishes, Edward and Sarah wiping them for her, and little Alison is playing with a rag-doll on the floor.*]

ALISON. I can't get those poor Indians out of my mind. I wonder if they are having any supper.

WILLIAM [*laughing*]. No corn meal! But they'll have game. Trust an Indian always to be able to find plenty of game. I can go out hunting and never see a rabbit, not to mention a wild turkey, much less a deer, but an Indian can scare up a deer most any time the way a robin gets a worm.

ALISON. Robins can't get worms out of frozen ground in the winter. Birds starve to death in the forest.

[*There is a knock at the door, William jumps to his feet, strides to the door and calls out.*]

WILLIAM. Who's there?

EUNICE. It's us! We've come to scalp you!

[*William unbolts the door and John Morton and Eunice, and her brother, Geoffrey Baxter, come in. Both men carry guns and Geoffrey a violin. There are greetings.*]

GEOFFREY [*to Alison*]. I've brought you a present. [*He stands his gun against the wall and takes out of his pocket a strand of red beads which he gives her.*] I got them from an old sailor at the fort today.

ALISON [*delightedly*]. Oh, Geoffrey, they are beautiful!

GEOFFREY. Do you know that tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day?

ALISON. No, in this wilderness I had clean forgotten it.

GEOFFREY. Will you be my valentine? Will you say "yes" at last? [*He speaks very low to her and the others are busy and pay no attention to them.*]

ALISON. Oh, Geoffrey! I'll tell you tomorrow.

GEOFFREY. Well, at least, may I put these on you? [*He puts the beads over her head and they drop down about her neck. He leans over and tries to kiss her but she escapes him and runs back to her dishes.*]

WILLIAM [*as they take off their wraps*]. You are welcome, neighbors, but you are the only family in the settlement that goes out at night.

EUNICE. A lusty heart goes all the day, a timid stops at night.

ALISON. There are Indians about.

EUNICE [*derisively*]. Dear me, I shall have to lock up my chicken coops.

ABAGAIL. Eunice, you are foolhardy.

EUNICE. Abagail, care killed a cat.

[*As they take off their heavy garments, John Morton examines William's gun, Geoffrey follows Alison who throws a dish-towel to him and he wipes the last dish, Eunice leans over the crib looking at the baby, and then speaks to little Alison.*]

EUNICE. Up yet? Such a late little girl.

ABAGAIL. I must put her to bed. [*She takes little Alison by the hand.*]

EUNICE. I am afraid we got here too early.

ABAGAIL. Oh, no, but we were late starting supper.

ALISON. We had a visitor.

GEOFFREY [*quickly*]. Who?

ALISON [*laughing and shrugging her shoulders*]. A young Indian. [*She hands him a pan, telling him where to hang it on the wall.*]

GEOFFREY. I don't like even an Indian here calling on you. I am jealous of everything.

ALISON [*saucily*]. He is a very fine young man.

WILLIAM. I've seen the fellow before. He is a young brave, going to be one of the wise men in the council some day. He has some education, been to school and with the white men a great deal. But I don't trust any of them. He said he

came to trade furs for meal but he came to the wrong diggings.

JOHN. I reckon he was just nosing around.

ALISON. Edward, get the apples, and, Sarah, get the cider.

[*The boy climbs the ladder to the loft and the girl goes with a pitcher into the other room. Alison takes down some tin-cups and hands them to Geoffrey to put on the table.*]

WILLIAM. They've got a lot of curiosity.

EUNICE [*sitting down in a chair and getting out her knitting*]. They're human.

ABAGAIL [*coming out of the other room with her knitting*]. The way that child sleeps! The way she falls asleep and the way she keeps on sleeping.

EUNICE. She's a healthy child. She would sleep through an Indian attack.

[*Edward lowers a rope with a basket of apples which Geoffrey takes and, setting it on the floor, picks out a large one, red and shining, and begins peeling it. Sarah brings a pitcher of cider which Alison places on the table by the cups.*]

ALISON. Now, Edward, dear, the nuts — and, Sarah, the popcorn. Will you have some cider now or later? [*To the guests.*]

JOHN [*laughing*]. I'll take some cider now and later.

[*Alison pours a cup of cider for him and Edward brings a basket of nuts.*]

ALISON. Brother Will, will you crack the nuts? I'm going to roast some apples.

JOHN. Let me crack the nuts while he finishes with his gun.

[*Alison gives him a smoothing iron and a hatchet and he goes to work. The women knit. Sarah has brought the pop-corn and Edward and she sit on the floor and shell it. Alison is also sitting on the floor selecting apples to roast.*]

GEOFFREY [*just finishing the peeling of his apple*]. Here you are, Alison. [*He hands it to her on the point of his knife and then the peeling.*] It's a whole unbroken rind. Do you want to throw it over your head? Will you name it? Will you name it right?

ALISON [*getting up laughing and taking the rind*]. Yes, I'll name it, but I won't tell you who. [*She looks at him roguishly, takes the apple rind and standing in the middle of the floor, swings it round her head three times after the old custom and then drops it over her shoulder behind her on the floor.*]

GEOFFREY [*leaning over anxiously to examine the apple rind on the floor*]. It is a G!

ALISON [*leaning over with him, mischievously*]. Indeed, sir, it is nothing of the sort. It is quite another letter.

GEOFFREY. It *is* a G. It couldn't be anything else.

ALISON. It looks much more like an F or a W.

GEOFFREY. It is a plain G.

ALISON. If it were a G at all, it ought to be a handsome G. But it isn't a G — it is a true W.

[*He tries to catch her hand but she eludes him. The others have been paying no attention to*

them but following their own occupations and talking to each other. John has taken up the violin and tuning it now calls out.]

JOHN. Take your partners! [*He plays a rollicking old-fashioned tune. William with great flourishes invites Eunice to dance and Geoffrey seizes Alison. The four of them dance old-fashioned figures and the dancing continues gayly for some time. Suddenly there is heard the whistle of a red-bird.*]

ALISON. Listen!

[*The whistle is repeated.*]

ALISON [*startled*]. At night!

[*They start apart and are silent listening.*]

JOHN [*laying down the violin*]. The red-skins are at their tricks.

[*They are still listening. Again the whistle is heard louder.*]

WILLIAM. It's the red rascals. What are they up to?

[*There comes the sharp report of a musket, the sharp crack of a bullet against the door. They all start, the little girl runs to her mother. William grabs his gun and quickly loads it, the other two men seize theirs from the corner where they stand. Other bullets are heard cracking against the house in quick succession.*]

ABAGAIL [*whimpering*]. Oh, dear! Heaven preserve us! The red-skins have come!

EUNICE. You've got what you have been looking for so long.

ALISON. Be quiet.

[*Abagail is panic-stricken. William goes to*

the door, opens the hole and after peering through cautiously, thrusts in his gun and fires. There is heard a shriek from without followed by the wierd cries of the Indians. Bullets begin to rain against the house.]

JOHN. Haven't you got other guns to load?

WILLIAM. Yes, I have. Son, get the carbine.

EDWARD. Yes, father. [*He climbs up and gets down the gun from the wall.*]

WILLIAM. Alison, the old musket and the pistols. There's a hole. [*To Geoffrey, indicating the shutter. Geoffrey inserts his gun and fires. There is a yell from without.*]

GEOFFREY. I do believe that's one less.

WILLIAM. John, go in and fire through the shutter-hole and watch.

EDWARD [*with a carbine*]. Here, father.

EUNICE. Oh, I've got to be doing something! [*She picks up the carbine.*] I'm going to the loft and fire from the loop-hole there. [*She climbs the ladder with her gun and soon is heard firing from up there.*]

SARAH. Oh, mother!

ABAGAIL [*moaning and holding the little girl*]. Oh, my child! Oh, dear.

WILLIAM. Edward.

EDWARD. Yes, father.

WILLIAM. Get me the cutlasses and the knives. They won't get in here [*grimly*], but we'd best be ready for a hand-to-hand fight. [*To the women.*] Keep loading the guns and pistols.

[*Alison loads the guns and pistols, handing them to the men. Abagail tries to assist but*

gets in the way and runs about moaning and wringing her hands. She goes into the other room and comes out.]

ABAGAIL. Little Alison sleeps through it all.

WILLIAM [*grimly*]. She would sleep through an Indian attack.

EUNICE [*calling from above*]. I hit one then, I know I did, I know it.

[*Abagail goes to the cradle, starts to take the baby out, puts it back, weeps, and becomes more helpless and distracted. The bullets crash against the house and the weird yells of the Indians are heard. Within the men shoot and Alison arms them. Eunice shouts from above and calls to them encouragingly. This continues for some time.*]

GEOFFREY [*fires and then quickly extracts his gun, looks through the loop-hole and speaks excitedly*]. I hit one then in the ankle. He fell like a deer. I saw him in the moonlight. [*He takes another gun from Alison, thrusts it in the hole and fires again. A bullet hits the window where he stands, he utters an exclamation, retreats a moment, then returns and fires again. Alison comes near him, touches him on the arm as if to make sure he is all right, then returns and loads another gun.*]

INDIAN [*from without*]. Surrender.

WILLIAM [*shouting back*]. Never. We have big garrison.

GEOFFREY. Run while you have the chance, you dogs. We'll be out on top of you in a jiffy.

JOHN [*coming out of the other room and yell-*

ing loudly]. The whole fort will be on your trail by morning.

EUNICE [*from above, imitating a man's voice, and climbing down the ladder enough to show her smiling face*]. We've got more soldiers here than at the fort, even. [*She climbs back and fires again. There is an answering yell.*] I got him in the leg.

WILLIAM [*seizes a pistol, peers through the loop-hole, then thrusts in the pistol and fires. There is a prolonged yell and scuffling of feet on the outside.*] I hit one that time, I think. [*Peers through the hole.*] I did. They are carrying him off and another one, too. Eunice did bring down her man, sure enough. [*He puts in a gun and fires again as Geoffrey does, too. There are one or two more yells and bullets in answer and then silence.*]

GEOFFREY. They are going away.

WILLIAM [*after a pause*]. They are gone.

GEOFFREY [*after another anxious, listening silence*]. At least several of them were wounded.

WILLIAM [*rubbing his hand down the barrel of his gun*]. Good work, old lady.

EUNICE [*climbing down the ladder*]. It's all over now and we must start for home.

ABAGAIL. Oh, you can't go tonight.

EUNICE. My children are there.

WILLIAM. They are all right. They are within the settlement.

EUNICE. Oh, they are safe enough, but they will be frightened. I must go to them. The Indians have gone back to their village and the

going in the opposite direction will be safe enough back in our settlement.

ABAGAIL. Oh, indeed they may be lurking behind trees.

EUNICE. Never fear. It wasn't a large band. I could almost count them in the moonlight and they've all gone to carry home their wounded.

JOHN. Eunice thinks right. We must go back to our little fellows. The red-skins won't be back and won't be near for they'd never think of any of us going out again tonight. They won't be back — they've had their night's work. But have a signal ready. In case of need, fire three times in rapid succession and I will come and bring all the men of the settlement over with me.

GEOFFREY [*to Alison*]. Let me stay with you to guard you. I can't bear to leave you.

ALISON. Your sister needs more than one man to protect her on the way home. You must go.

GEOFFREY. But I think I *must* stay.

ALISON. No, no, I will not let you.

WILLIAM. We will be safe enough now. But I will fire the gun for signal if necessary. [*He unbolts the door and peers out cautiously.*] There is not a sign of them. They've had their dose. I think it is as safe for you to go as if you were walking the streets of Philadelphia. If I didn't I'd make you stay.

EUNICE. We would have to go even if it were not safe.

WILLIAM. But I know the customs and tricks

of these varmints pretty well. They'll not be back tonight.

JOHN. Some time later, maybe.

[*They get ready to go.*]

GEOFFREY [*holding Alison's hand*]. I can't bear to leave you. No telling what may happen before I may see you again.

ALISON. You must go now. Aren't you coming tomorrow? [*She pushes him out after the others. William comes in from without where he has proceeded with the Mortons, shuts the door and bolts it. The curtain falls. End of Act II.*]

ACT III

[*It is after breakfast the next morning in the same room. Abagail has put the baby into its crib. Sarah sits on a low stool sewing. Little Alison plays with her rag-doll on the floor. Alison hangs up some pans and so on after washing the dishes.*]

ALISON. Where was brother Will going this morning?

ABAGAIL. To help clear away Cyrus Halloway's new field.

EDWARD. It's wet to burn stumps.

ABAGAIL. They haven't got the trees cut down yet, let alone burning the stumps.

SARAH. Father went away and left us all alone and maybe the Indians will come and get us.

EDWARD. He knew they wouldn't come or he

wouldn't have gone away. Father knows all about the ways of savages.

ALISON. He thinks there is no possibility at all of their coming in the daytime and that they will not come even at night for a long time, if ever, because so many of them were wounded and they haven't a very strong force now and believe we will be prepared for them and they are afraid of the soldiers at the fort.

ABAGAIL [*sits disconsolately*]. I don't think they are afraid of anything. That attack last night was enough to make us all die of shock. I wonder any of us survived. Oh, I wish we had never left Jersey. For all they say this land is so rich I'd rather be poor and safe and back in Jersey. And we weren't so poor there, either, but lived like kings and queens compared to this.

ALISON. In a few years, sister, this land will flow with milk and honey and bloom with peach trees and roses, and you will have forgotten you were ever afraid of an Indian.

EDWARD. I'm not afraid of them now.

SARAH. I am — almighty afraid.

ABAGAIL. Little maids don't say "almighty" — only rough men say that.

SARAH. But I am that.

EDWARD. What? A rough man? [*Laughing uproariously.*]

SARAH. No, but almighty afraid.

ALISON. I am going down to Mary Hopkins'. I promised to help her this morning with her quilting.

ABAGAIL. You're going to leave me all alone?

EDWARD. You aren't alone, mother.

ALISON. If Will hadn't said it is now perfectly safe, I wouldn't leave you. But you know he truly thinks so. *He* has gone.

EDWARD. The creek is melted and full of floating ice this morning.

SARAH. You can't cross it.

ABAGAIL. 'Tis very cruel for you all to go away and leave me when I am so unnerved.

ALISON. But, Abagail, dear, I promised to go to Mary and you know Will said it is all safe now. [*She is tying on her hood and putting on her shawl.*] I shall not have to cross the creek, I can go down all the way on this side. [*To the children.*] I am going in the opposite direction from the Indian camp. We will all be back for dinner. You know it is St. Valentine's day. I think — perhaps — Geoffrey will be over this afternoon. [*Smiling and blushing a little.*]

ABAGAIL. I don't see why you don't marry him and make him take you back to Philadelphia.

ALISON. Perhaps I don't want to go back to Philadelphia.

[*Alison goes. Abagail sits down with her mending.*]

ABAGAIL. Edward, will you bring in some wood. Don't go further than the wood-pile against the house.

EDWARD. I reckon I will do that, mother. [*He goes out and brings in a log of wood.*] Aren't big log fires fine, mother? In one way it would be nicer to have winter last nearly all summer so as to have the big fires. We have so much wood.

ABAGAIL. It is a good thing we have some-

thing. Wood seems to be about the only thing we do have.

EDWARD [*after going out and bringing in some more wood*]. Aunt Alison is quite out of sight. She runs like a deer. You know, mother, she can run as well as a boy can? [*He goes out again but comes in a few moments later without any wood and much frightened.*] Oh, mother, there are Indians out there! The woods are full of them! [*He shuts the door and bolts it behind him.*]

ABAGAIL. Oh, Edward!

EDWARD. They are creeping up behind the house. They are hiding behind the trees. They are coming from tree to tree.

SARAH. Oh, mother! [*Running to her mother and crying.*]

ABAGAIL. They'll scalp us all. They'll break in and murder us all.

EDWARD. Let's try to run for the settlement. Maybe they won't see us with the house between us and them and we can escape. Come on.

[*Abagail catches up the baby in her arms and takes Sarah by the hand.*]

ABAGAIL [*to Edward*]. Bring little Alison.

[*He catches the child by the hand, pulls her up from the floor, she resists, but he drags her along and together they all hurry out, leaving the door open. As they go there is heard the whistle of a red-bird, followed by the whistle of a quail or bob-white. In a few moments little Alison comes running in again and sits down on the floor, picks up her rag-doll and begins to play with it. In a few*

moments more an Indian appears at the door, looks cautiously in, and then enters. Another comes and another till five have entered. They are in full war-paint with tomahawks, guns, and knives. They utter their guttural expressions, then begin dancing about, giving their weird yells. Other Indians on the outside keep up a din of strange cries. The ones on the inside run in and out, break furniture, throw things down, hunt for the bag of meal which they find and with laughs and cries of satisfaction they play with it. One of them catches sight of the little girl who has been sitting staring at them in fascinated terror, and seizes her.]

RED FOX. Ugh! Papoose. Kill!

GREY CLOUD. Scalp little white squaw.

WHITE FEATHER [*entering*]. No, no, give me.

[*The others cry* "Kill" *and* "Scalp" *and dance about her. One of them, Red Fox, seizes her by the hair and they are about to scalp or kill her outright when White Feather interposes, knocks them away, catches the child, and takes her away in his arms.*]

WHITE FEATHER. No, no. Me keep. My prize. Me keep papoose. She *mine.* [*He lifts her to his shoulder. The others yell and dance about, run into the other room and out again, pulling things about and in the general mêlée White Feather escapes, running. Curtain to Act III.*]

ACT IV

[*It is early afternoon of the same day. The scene is in the Indian encampment in the deep woods where the eye travels as far as it can see among great oaks, elms, beeches, and sycamores. A brook is heard singing among its grasses and pebbles. On one side is an Indian wigwam with others extending off behind it. Two Indians, The Beaver and Grey Cloud sit on the ground near the center, wrapped in blankets and smoking pipes. They sit in silence for a little bit when the young Indian, White Feather, comes running in followed by little Alison. He runs about, followed by her, catches her and lets her go, finally picks her up and dances about with her and then sits down on the ground with her in his lap. The others sit stolidly smoking their pipes without lifting their eyes.*]

WHITE FEATHER. White papoose! Little white squaw! White papoose like Indian?

LITTLE ALISON. Yes, I like you, but I want to go home.

[*Another Indian, Red Fox, comes in, looks at White Feather with the child, shrugs his shoulders, grunts, and sits down on the ground near the other two Indians.*]

WHITE FEATHER. Like White Feather?

LITTLE ALISON. I like you but I don't like *them*, and I want to go home.

[*She is frightened and clings to White Feather*

who continues to play with her, laughing and fondling her.]

WHITE FEATHER. White papoose! Little white squaw!

RED FOX. White Feather once young buck, now squaw! [*With the utmost scorn.*] Play with papoose. He no young buck now, no brave chief. Squaw.

[*The other two Indians grunt and laugh, White Feather looks very angry. An old Indian chief, The Eagle, comes out and slowly and with dignity seats himself on the ground with the others.*]

RED FOX [*again and derisively*]. White Feather no brave Indian, he white squaw.

[*The old chief grunts low, the other two grunt and laugh. White Feather breaks out into the Indian tongue which may be whatever sounds the actors wish to manufacture and the audience will be none the wiser — whether they are talking Choctaw, Chinese or Chile Sauce, though it is really the tongue of the Miamis whose home was the land of south-western Ohio. Red Fox, Grey Cloud, The Beaver, and White Feather talk excitedly, the others evidently taunting White Feather till he gets up angrily and walks off with the child. The old chief sits stolidly smoking, the other three grunt, shrug their shoulders, and are amused. They talk to each other in the Indian language for a few moments when Alison appears. She is terribly frightened but resolute, is very pale, and carries a white cloth tied to a wild cherry*

limb. She stands a moment, while the Indians silently watch her, and then she advances a few steps.]

ALISON. I — I — am Alison Carmichael. I have come — in peace. Oh, I am not a spy. I have come in peace. [*She holds out her flag.*] I have not come to spy on you, to tell anything, but only for one purpose — only to beg — is this — is this the big chief? [*To the old Indian. He nods and grunts assent.*] Oh, I beg you — I *implore* you — to tell me — where is the little child? [*As she says* "where" *she impulsively takes a step towards him, her eyes beseeching him. But the Indians do not answer her questions, remaining impassive, staring at the ground.*] Oh, won't you tell me something? Anything — about her? You know? Is she living? Is she — is she dead? [*The Indians keep absolute silence, paying no more attention to her than if she were a red-bud tree or a stone in the brook.*] Won't you tell me something? [*Looking from one to the other of them.*] Just one little thing? [*A pleading pause.*] Only that she is alive! Oh, please tell me that she is alive! [*Another pause while Alison stands looking very troubled, pale, and lovely, entreating the Indians who do not answer nor even notice her. Then she takes another tack.*] I have come a long way through the forest alone. My people do not know that I have come. I am very tired and weary. I am very sad and anxious. I love the little white child. I would brave anything for her, to return her safely to her home. I do not fear you, chief. I do not think you will hurt me. Your people

were hungry, some of them were sick and suffering. Some of my people treated you badly, you were disappointed and angry.

THE EAGLE [*at last breaking his silence*]. Young white squaw no wise. She no see. White braves promise meal. Break promise.

ALISON. I know they did. Some of them lie and steal and break their words to each other as well as to you. But they had no meal to spare. They ought not to have promised it to you.

RED FOX. White squaw fool. Squaws fools, no can counsel. Braves council. Young white squaw go home, cook, work, squaw's work. [*He speaks hotly and derisively, while Grey Cloud and The Beaver grunt in laughter.*]

ALISON [*looking quickly from them to the old chief*]. I have not come to argue, nor to fight. Braves do that, red braves and white braves. I am only a squaw, I have come only to beg for the little child.

[*White Feather appears, is startled and looks anxiously at Alison.*]

ALISON [*turning impulsively towards the young Indian*]. Oh, White Feather, help me, help me! *You* understand. Make them understand that I have come not to spy on them, that I have nothing against them, that I only want the child. Tell me where she is? Is she — is she alive?

WHITE FEATHER [*looking interrogatively at The Eagle*]. Me tell?

THE EAGLE [*nodding assent*]. Umph.

WHITE FEATHER. Little child safe.

ALISON [*with great emotion, almost breaking down*]. Oh, thank you. I knew I could trust

you — that you wouldn't let her be hurt. Where is she? Is she here?

[*White Feather is about to reply when Red Fox, leaping to his feet, suddenly and vehemently protests in the Indian tongue.*]

GREY CLOUD. Red Fox right. White Feather fool. Talk too much.

ALISON. Oh, he has not told me anything that matters, anything that can injure you if I were to tell it, and I shall not tell a thing. Don't you see? White Feather is only kind to me.

RED FOX. White Feather fool. Talk to squaw.

THE BEAVER. Red Fox right. He wise brave. Hold tongue. White Feather talk too much — some fool.

RED FOX. White men promise meal, no keep promise. White Feather say can make keep promise, can get meal. White Feather go, talk to white squaw, no get meal, no keep promise. Talk too much. No wise man, no brave — fool.

GREY CLOUD. Red Fox right. White Feather talk too much to white squaw.

ALISON. Oh, no, no, no, he isn't a fool. He hasn't told me anything that would hurt you.

RED FOX [*who has been stalking about*]. White Feather fool. Umph. [*He gives a sort of angry, nasal, guttural growl like that of an animal.*] White squaw fool, white squaw make trouble. Umph. White squaw go home, stay in wigwam, work, no council with braves. Umph. [*With great aversion and contempt he advances menacingly towards Alison who starts back. The*

Beaver and Grey Cloud grunt "Umph" *with some rising anger. White Feather goes towards Alison.*]

WHITE FEATHER. White squaw no fool, no make trouble. Good.

RED FOX. All squaws fool — white squaw much more fool. White man some fool, no keep word, lie, make trouble. All land [*extending his arm in a sweeping gesture*] all belong to our fathers. White men come, no buy, take. Come, say "brother" — no keep word. Make war, kill Indians. Take land away from Indians, cut trees. Indians have no home, no woods, no hunting-ground. White men take skins, no pay. Take furs — otter, beaven, bear — no pay. Promise — no give — promise — lie. [*He has worked himself up into a passion and has also worked upon Grey Cloud and The Beaver till they are greatly excited.*]

WHITE FEATHER. White squaw no make trouble. She no lie.

RED FOX. White Feather fool, no brave. White Feather squaw. Go home with white squaw, work like squaw, cook. [*He begins dancing about and pulls out his tomahawk.*]

WHITE FEATHER [*very angry*]. Red Fox make trouble for whole tribe. White men have fort and many soldiers. White men stronger than Indians. Red Fox fool make trouble.

RED FOX [*tauntingly*]. White Feather no get meal. [*Appealing to the others and trying to incite them against White Feather.*] White Feather no do anything. Only talk.

GREY CLOUD. Red Fox right. Umph.

THE BEAVER. White Feather no get meal. Umph.

RED FOX. White Feather fool. White squaw make trouble. [*He gives one of their peculiar yells and dances from the two Indians towards Alison. They jump to their feet, follow him, leaping and uttering queer guttural, unearthly yells. They dance about brandishing their tomahawks. White Feather watches them closely, keeping between them and Alison who is terrified. The old Eagle is unperturbed. This continues, becoming more and more exciting, dramatic and menacing to Alison, when White Feather begins to talk in the Indian tongue excitedly, evidently expostulating with the others and endeavoring to persuade the old Indian to interfere. Red Fox, The Beaver, and Grey Cloud reply with derisive yells, threats, and closer drawing towards Alison, while The Eagle sits as unmoved as a rock. Suddenly Red Fox leaps forward, reaching to strike Alison. White Feather instantly lunges like a cat towards him, and The Beaver seizes his chance to make at Alison, White Feather leaps back at him and as he eludes White Feather, jumping away, the latter follows him and Red Fox returns, darts at Alison, clutches her in his arms, she screaming, and is about to throttle her, when the old Indian rises to his feet exclaiming in a loud deep tone in the Indian tongue. Red Fox, however, does not relax his hold on Alison and White Feather leaps back from the other Indian to him, grapples and chokes him, he still holding Alison, when, amid the yelling and scuffle, The Eagle*

speaks again, louder and more commandingly. Red Fox lets go his victim, White Feather loosens Red Fox, the others stop and they all stand suddenly silent and motionless, Alison breathing heavily and trying to recover herself. The Eagle speaks to them in the Miami tongue and then turns to Alison.]

THE EAGLE. Young white squaw go home! [*Majestically raising his right arm and pointing in the direction from which she has come.*] Young white squaw no come back. Young white squaw go home. [*He speaks very slowly as though unaccustomed to English and measuring his words. Red Fox, Grey Cloud, and The Beaver look angry and sullen. Alison turns to go.*]

WHITE FEATHER. Me go with white squaw to end of woods. [*He watches the three Indians scornfully, then, as if in challenge and with a final contemptuous look at them, he throws back his head and turns away from them and towards Alison. She goes, he following her closely. The old Eagle sits down again, his back towards the retreating figures of Alison and White Feather. The other three Indians stand watching them with ugly anger and hatred in their faces.*]

RED FOX. White child! Where find white child? White child alive? [*He laughs, jeers, yells after Alison and White Feather as they disappear.*] Scalp little white papoose now!

GREY CLOUD. White Feather come back soon.

[*Red Fox laughs, yells, leaps in the air, and runs screaming in the direction Alison and White Feather have taken. The other two*

sneak off in the opposite direction, muttering, as if bent on mischief. Curtain to act IV.]

ACT V

[*It is late afternoon of the same day, the fourteenth of February, twenty-four hours after the beginning of the play. Abagail is sitting disconsolately in the center of the room, doing nothing, looking woe-begone. The baby lies in its crib. Eunice sits near the spinning wheel by the window and every now and then looks out as if watching for some one to come. Abagail weeps, covers her eyes with a handkerchief. The children, Edward and Sarah, sit watching their mother and whenever she weeps, Sarah cries, too.*]

ABAGAIL. Oh, dear! [*She moans and sobs into her handkerchief.*]

EUNICE. Abagail, dear, don't cry so.

ABAGAIL. Oh, it's very well for you to say, "don't cry," but it's not *your* child that's stolen by the Indians.

EUNICE. There, there, Abagail, I didn't mean to hurt you. But it's too hard on the rest of us when you cry so. You see you have other children. Come here, my little bird. [*To Sarah, who goes to her.*] Do not be so disconsolate. The little sister is not lost forever. She must be safe and will come back to us — oh, she will be here sooner than the flowers and the birds! Have you seen a bluebird yet, Sarah?

SARAH [*wiping her eyes*]. No.

EDWARD. Robins come before bluebirds.

EUNICE. No, I think bluebirds are supposed to come the very first of all.

EDWARD. But robins *do* come first, for they have come. Aunt Alison and I saw them yesterday and again today and heard them, too.

EUNICE. Then spring is not far away, for he is the sure harbinger of April hopes. And after him come all the flowers.

SARAH [*looking up with interest and a smile*]. Violets?

EUNICE. And what else, Edward?

EDWARD. Spring beauties.

EUNICE [*to Sarah*]. And then?

SARAH. Squirrel-corn.

EUNICE [*to Edward*]. And then?

EDWARD. Adder's-tongue.

[*Eunice looks from one to the other and they answer as if antiphonally.*]

SARAH. Dutchman's-breeches.

EDWARD. Blood-root.

SARAH. Jack-in-the-pulpit.

EDWARD. Wild-carrot.

SARAH. Dandelions.

EDWARD. Dog-tooth violets.

SARAH. Anem — anem —

EUNICE. Anemones. Yes, all springing up in gay little groups out of the dead leaves in different parts of the woods like actors in a grand old-fashioned carnival — the carnival of the coming of summer.

ABAGAIL. I don't see how you can talk and be so flippant and heartless at such a time.

EUNICE. Abagail, dear, don't think I'm heart-

less, but it is wiser to keep people cheerful — especially little people. [*She looks out of the window, smiles, and says gayly.*] Ah, there come my little rascals. [*She goes to the door and opens it to her boy and girl, Arthur and Lucy.*] But I thought I told you to stay at home and mind the house and see that the fire didn't go out.

LUCY. We washed the dishes and tidied up everything and carried in wood and made porridge for supper and then we came over —

ARTHUR. To fetch home our little mother.

EUNICE. You little beggars! But I can't go just yet. Take Edward and Sarah out to play, but don't go far from the house. Stay close where I can see you and call you when I want you.

LUCY. All right, mother.

ARTHUR. Dear little mother!

EUNICE [*to the children*]. Now, run along, lambkins, and have a good time. [*The children all go out, she follows them to the door, and throws kisses after them, then turns and watches Abagail, who is silently weeping and mopping her eyes and nose. Eunice goes to her, puts her arms round her, stroking her hair tenderly, and talking to her in a low and tender voice.*] I know it is very hard for thee, poor thing. Do not think I do not sympathize. I love thy little child, and Alison Carmichael is as dear to my heart as a sister could be.

ABAGAIL. But you let her go to those Indians.

EUNICE. She would go. I had no choice.

[*There is a knock at the door and Eunice, answering it, admits two ladies of the settlement, Mrs. King and Mrs. Worthington.*]

MRS. KING. We came to express our sympathy and to learn if there is any good news.

ABAGAIL [*weeping*]. No, no, no! No good news nor ever will be again.

MRS. WORTHINGTON. Don't give up hope, neighbor. They stole the child because they liked her, to adopt her, depend upon it. And in that case they will take good care of her and we will get her back, never fear.

ABAGAIL. But Alison's gone, too.

MRS. WORTHINGTON. Alison?

ABAGAIL [*to Eunice, weeping*]. Tell her.

EUNICE. Alison was in an agony about the child and reproached herself that if she hadn't been away from home this morning the dreadful thing some way or another would not have chanced. And she hoped that a woman could do more with the Indians than guns —

ABAGAIL [*breaking in*]. What could she do with those savage butchers?

MRS. WORTHINGTON. Alison didn't go to them?

EUNICE. Yes.

MRS. WORTHINGTON. Oh, mercy! oh, mercy!

MRS. KING. Heaven preserve us!

EUNICE. She has confidence in that young Indian, White Feather. She didn't tell her plan to any one but me and at first I tried to dissuade her, but somehow she overpersuaded me. I have such confidence in her. Anyhow I couldn't dissuade her from her intention — I could only have told and then she would have escaped and run off somehow, for she was determined and she has a will of her own. So I kept still about it till afterwards

as she asked me to do. She set out early this afternoon and she has had time to get back by now — more than time — to get back.

MRS. KING. I put no trust in red-skins.

MRS. WORTHINGTON. Nor I.

ABAGAIL. She will never be back! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

EUNICE. The garrison is taking the matter up. The general is on his way here now to ask Abagail definitely about everything. The rumor is that a scouting party is forming.

MRS. KING [*looking out of the window*]. The General is coming.

[*Abagail is much flurried. Eunice goes to the door and opens it to the General, a red-faced, stout, pompous old fellow in full Revolutionary regimentals. Following him are William, John, and Geoffrey, all looking very nervous and anxious.*]

GENERAL. Ah, good afternoon, ladies! [*Bowing low to Abagail.*] Good afternoon, Mrs. Carmichael, and ladies!

[*The people dispose themselves about the room, the General seated in the center, Abagail near the baby's crib, the men at the back on one side, the women rather on the other. The children have crept in after the General, and, fascinated, are watching him.*]

GENERAL. We are planning to send out a scouting party at once to be headed by our ablest soldier, Captain Hunter, who is much liked by the Indians and has treated with them a great deal. And I am come to ask you for the details of your attack and see if we can find out what Indians com-

mitted the deed. Was White Feather among them?

ABAGAIL. Yes, oh, yes, he was one of the prime movers.

EUNICE. Oh, Abagail, you told me that you never looked back, but ran as hard as you could — then how could you tell that White Feather was among them?

ABAGAIL. Well, he must have been.

GENERAL. Now, Mrs. Carmichael, try to be exact. It will help very much. Try to tell me just what happened.

ABAGAIL. Well, White Feather came about this time yesterday afternoon to steal a bag of meal.

EUNICE. Oh, Abagail!

ABAGAIL. I am perfectly sure he came to steal it, but we were all at home, so he decided to beg instead.

EUNICE. Alison said he didn't beg — he wanted to pay for it with valuable skins.

WILLIAM. Of course I couldn't let him have the meal.

GENERAL. Was he angry?

ABAGAIL. Oh, he pretended to be good-natured but he went away and brought back a horde of them to attack the house at night.

EUNICE. There wasn't a horde. There could have been only a few of them for they gave up the attack so easily.

ABAGAIL. Well, they *did* come, and it *seemed* like a horde.

GENERAL. Yes, yes, I know all that. [*Impatiently. He is an irascible old person and drums*

with his fingers.] But what about the child's capture?

ABAGAIL. This morning when my husband said we were perfectly safe — and I don't think any one is perfectly safe with Indians within a thousand miles of you — you're never perfectly safe, General, you know you never are!

GENERAL [*very impatient and puffy and bored*]. Oh, yes, yes, yes! Go on, go on!

ABAGAIL. Well, this morning when I was left all alone here with the children Edward went out to bring in wood and saw Indians —

EDWARD. They were dodging and hiding and slipping from tree to tree.

GENERAL [*with great severity, pouncing on Edward*]. Children should be seen and not heard! Allow your mother to tell her story.

ABAGAIL. I felt that I could not defend the house against them.

GENERAL. I should think likely not.

ABAGAIL. So I caught the baby in my arms, seized little Sarah by the hand, commanded Edward to bring little Alison, and we started to run. We had gone some distance when I found the child had escaped from Edward and gone back, as I suppose, to get her doll. We would all have been slaughtered if we had gone back, so, trusting that the child's tender age might save her in the hearts of the savages, we ran on, plunging into the icy waters of the creek full of floating ice, and finally arrived more dead than alive at the Mortons' house.

GENERAL. You weren't close to any of them, then? Didn't look one in the face?

ABAGAIL. Look a savage in the face? Mercy sakes, I'd die right there looking one in the face!

GENERAL. And you didn't turn and look back as you ran?

ABAGAIL. Gracious me, no. It's all I can do to run at all.

GENERAL. When the men came over from the settlement, they found the house topsy-turvy and the child gone and the meal? And you didn't see an Indian closely? Very well, madam, that is all. I will send out a company.

[*There is a slight noise at the door, it is opened and Alison comes in extremely pale and tired-looking, her hair rumpled from the tussle with Red Fox. They all exclaim and are much excited.*]

EUNICE [*running to Alison*]. Oh, my dear, my dear, thank God!

[*Geoffrey, pale and excited, rushes to Alison but gives place to the General who rises and advances to her. With enormous ceremony he bows to her, takes her by the hand and leads her to his own chair. Alison drops into it with a sigh of extreme weariness.*]

GENERAL. Now, my dear young lady, will you tell us exactly what you discovered at the Indian camp and all about your expedition? Shed all the light you can on the mystery.

[*They all range themselves about her in an interested group. Geoffrey edges as close to her as possible.*]

ALISON. Oh, I am so tired! [*Closing her eyes.*] There isn't anything to tell except that little Alison is alive and safe.

ABAGAIL. Oh! [*They all exclaim and William puts his arm round his wife.*]

GENERAL. But — but! What about the expedition? What did you discover? Tell us all about that.

ALISON. There isn't anything to tell. I went to the Indian encampment — a walk through the woods. [*She opens her eyes and her face lightens into a rather teasing smile.*] You all know what a walk through the woods about here is like. It isn't exactly like a walk along the streets of the town of Philadelphia. The virgin forests are quite different. In the woods there are tangles, briars, underbrush, and at this time of year no birds to make it merry. I found it altogether wearisome. [*She closes her lips and eyes as if that were all she had to say.*]

GENERAL. Yes, yes, my dear young lady. We all know the troubles that would beset your steps in the wilderness. You need not go into details concerning that. But what about the Indians?

ALISON. Oh, the Indians? I found their camp at last.

GENERAL. Yes, yes.

ALISON. I met a number of the Indians. Some of them were polite and [*with a twisted funny smile of recollection*] some of them were distinctly rude.

GENERAL. Yes, yes. Well?

ALISON. That's all.

GENERAL. What? What? Have you nothing more to say?

ALISON. Truly there isn't any more to tell worth the telling.

GENERAL. Very well, I will organize the company at once and send it out immediately.

ALISON [*eying him and thinking*]. Oh, yes, and they told me that the child is safe.

GENERAL. That is really nothing. The company will start at once.

ALISON [*hurriedly*]. Then they advised me to go home and one of them escorted me to the clearing.

GENERAL [*rising*]. Ladies, good afternoon! I will go at once and give the orders.

ALISON. Indeed it would be best not to anger the Indians any further.

GENERAL. I think it necessary to take steps. It unfortunately may mean a bloody war but —

ALISON [*rising and going to him*]. Oh, will you please not start your soldiers right away?

GENERAL. I believe it best to deal with the savages sternly and precipitately.

ALISON. Oh, will you please, sir, give me your word not to do anything before tomorrow morning?

GENERAL [*hesitating*]. Well, upon my soul! Why?

ALISON [*pleading earnestly*]. I can't tell you exactly yet, but you will promise, General, won't you, please? [*Very coaxingly and fetchingly.*]

GENERAL [*giving in to her*]. Well, well, well, though I declare I can't for the life of me see what you are up to, I will wait till tomorrow. And now I must be going. Ladies, good afternoon! [*With great gallantry.*]

JOHN. I will go with you, General. Are you going now? [*To his wife.*]

MRS. WORTHINGTON. We may as well all be going.

EUNICE [*to Geoffrey*]. Are you coming?

GEOFFREY. In a moment.

[*They all say good-by and follow the General out, John, Eunice, Mrs. King, Mrs. Worthington, the two children, and Geoffrey goes with them, then comes back and hangs about the door. Abagail goes into the other room. Alison, who has risen at their departure, drops to the settle.*]

WILLIAM [*to Alison*]. Are you quite sure the child is safe?

ALISON. Quite.

WILLIAM. What are you planning? This waiting is terrible.

ALISON [*smiling sadly*]. Yes, brother, terrible. Can't you do something to divert her? [*With a gesture in the direction of Abagail in the other room.*

WILLIAM. I will try. Abagail! [*Calling.*] Could you come and help me with the new calf?

SARAH. I want to see the little new calf.

WILLIAM. All right. Come along.

[*William, Abagail, Edward, Sarah go out. Geoffrey stands and looks at Alison with wonder, almost with reverence in his eyes.*]

GEOFFREY. Alison!

ALISON. Yes, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY. Are you truly safe and unhurt?

ALISON. Yes, truly safe and unhurt.

GEOFFREY. You don't know what you put me through.

ALISON. Not half what I put myself through. Scratchings and chokings and clawings by briars and brambles and Indians. [*She rubs her neck and arms.*]

GEOFFREY. Did they dare touch you? Did they dare?

ALISON. Oh, did they not? Now, Geoffrey, keep your curiosity to yourself. Some day I'll maybe tell you all about it — when we are a hundred. Not now. Not till this episode is safely over, as I hope it will be soon. It isn't yet.

GEOFFREY. Alison, marry me and we'll go back to Philadelphia to live. [*He seizes her hand.*]

ALISON. Oh, Geoffrey, dear, if you only had a little more of the hero in you — a little more of the Indian brave.

GEOFFREY. Alison, I am in earnest.

ALISON. Geoffrey, so am I.

GEOFFREY. Will you do what I propose, then?

ALISON. I may promise to marry you, but I'll never go back to Philadelphia. With all its hardships I like this free life of the West.

GEOFFREY. But promise me you'll never again undertake an expedition alone to an Indian camp.

ALISON. Oh, yes, I can promise that. You see I wasn't exactly welcome. [*Smiling.*] Now, will you go, please? I am so tired.

GEOFFREY. Poor little girl. But may I come over tonight? You know it is St. Valentine's?

ALISON. I suppose you may come whenever you like now. [*Smiling a little wanly.*] But I am so very tired — I must rest a little. [*He*

kisses her and goes. She follows him, throws him a kiss as he departs, then comes in, leaving the door open, looks about at the empty and rather disheveled room and throws herself down wearily into the low chair in front of the fire. She sighs aloud and sits there a few moments when White Feather appears in the doorway with little Alison in his arms.]

LITTLE ALISON. Oh! [*Holding out her arms.*]

ALISON [*starting up with a cry of joy*]. Oh, my precious baby! [*The child runs to her and she catches and hugs and kisses it. Then she speaks to White Feather.*] I knew you would bring her back. I was waiting for you.

WHITE FEATHER. Today — morning — me take baby to save her. Indians scalp her — me save her for you. Me do anything for young white squaw.

ALISON. Yes, I know. You are good.

LITTLE ALISON. Mother?

ALISON. Mother and father are out at the stable, looking at the little new calf. Run out to them and give them the nicest surprise they ever had in their whole lives. [*Little Alison runs out. Alison turns to White Feather.*] Won't you come in now and have supper with us?

WHITE FEATHER. No, me go back.

ALISON. But they will want to thank you.

WHITE FEATHER. You thank. Nough.

ALISON. Oh, I *do* thank you — you will never know how much. I had faith in you. You are good and very brave. You have much influence

with the old chief. You will be a big chief in the council some day.

WHITE FEATHER. Me no like Chief Carmichael. No keep word.

ALISON. He'd give you all the meal he has now.

WHITE FEATHER. Indians angry. Red Fox make trouble. Me no could help attack. Me do anything to save — you.

ALISON. The great chief at the fort was going to send out his soldiers to attack your people for the child. I persuaded him to wait till tomorrow, hoping you could bring her back before then.

WHITE FEATHER. Young white squaw very good, very wise. Me go.

ALISON. There must be no more trouble between your people and my people.

WHITE FEATHER. No more war — peace.

ALISON. Oh, yes, peace.

WHITE FEATHER. My people no stay here much longer. Go west. Go far. Me go far away. No see young white squaw no more.

ALISON [*with feeling*]. Oh, are you going away?

WHITE FEATHER. My people go soon — very soon. No hunting-grounds here no more. Our land all gone from us. My people must go away. Me go with my people. Me go far away.

ALISON. Oh, won't I ever see you again?

WHITE FEATHER [*with great dignity and sadness*]. No. Never no more. Me go far away.

ALISON [*impulsively and with much emotion*].

Will you let me give you something to thank you for your kindness — something to remember me by? [*She looks about for a second, then quickly takes off the red beads, Geoffrey's present, which White Feather's eyes have been admiring, and gives them to him. He takes them and as she offers him her hand, he takes it slowly, holds it long and tenderly, with a lingering look at her.*]

WHITE FEATHER. Me go far away to the west — me never forget — good-by.

ALISON [*with much feeling and tears in her eyes*]. Good-by.

[*He goes out and as she stands looking after him, the curtain falls. End of Act V and of the play.*]

IN MENDELESIA

"In Mendelesia" Parts I and II form an experiment in treating the same theme differently. Part I is a study in mysticism and symbolism, while Part II is purely a little play of modern realism. The two are intended to be presented together.

Part I

CHARACTERS:

The Queen.
Princess Modrehard.
Princess Agravaine.
Princess Illacette.
A Scullion.

[*It is early morning before daybreak in early spring. The light is dim and grey so that things are only half seen. Dark objects are black, the others colorless. And the air is cold. It is a room in a moldering old castle. Draperies in dull faded shades of purple and green and blue hang from the walls, and one large piece of moth-eaten tapestry and some rusty armor. To the right a heavy door opens into a passage leading to the great hall. To the left are doors, one leading to the sleeping apartments and the other to the kitchens. A window at the back looks down into the court below. In the center of the room a carved black table stands prepared*

for the morning meal with silver and pewter plates and cups. Four heavy carved chairs are placed by it, two behind, one at either end. A footstool stands at one corner of the table near one of the chairs. Three unlighted candles in blackened old silver candlesticks are on the table. A very tall brass candlestick with a thick candle in it stands on the floor near the window. It, too, is unlighted. In the chill room it is bleak and still. Even later when there is more light the sinister silence and dark decay prevail. A lean old woman with a crown on her head enters from the door leading to the sleeping apartments. Though not feeble she walks with a heavy stick. She is tall and her hair is white and her eyes black. Her gown of embroidered purple velvet is old and worn and torn and her crown is tarnished. She goes to the window and looks out.]

THE QUEEN [*speaking aways monotonously*]. It is not yet day. Every morning we arise before daybreak. We arise before it is yet light, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. It is our custom. [*She goes about the room tapping with her stick and feeling here and there.*] It is dark within, it is not yet day without. They should have lighted the candles. [*She repeats the thought slowly, complainingly.*] They should have made a light. [*She goes to the table and peers at it.*] They have not yet placed the food upon the table. They should have had the meal ready. They are slack and lazy. [*A servant enters. He is young and stu-*

pid-looking, sloppy, unkempt, down at the heel in his attire, tall and lank and awkward. He bows low to her. She speaks to him scoldingly but without emphasis.] Thou lazy scullion! There is no food upon the table and the candles are not yet lighted. Must we tell thee again and again and thrice over what thou shouldst do? Thy father was a good servant, obedient and humble. Why art not thou what thy father was? [*She waves her stick at him as if about to strike him but does not do so. He cringes and cowers.*] Go. Go. At once. Bring us our breakfast. But stay. Where is the seneschal? Why is he not here to repeat to us what news he has gathered for our morning's entertainment? Thou and the others perchance have detained him in the kitchens to listen to his idle gossip. Where is he?

SCULLION [*drawling and speaking through his nose*]. Your majesty, he is with the Princess Modrehard in the hall, relating to her the latest news.

THE QUEEN. Ah! Ah! She has forestalled us. She forestalls us or baits us time and again. She forestalls us again and again and again. Go. [*The Scullion bows low and departs. The old Queen goes tapping about again.*] Our daughter knows our customs, yet she would confound us. We had always reverence for the customs of our father, the King. [*She sighs and goes to the window again and looks out.*] It is not yet day. The light is grey and uncertain.

[*The Princess Modrehard enters from the passage to the great hall. She is thin and dark, bearing some resemblance to her mother, the*

queen, but is smaller and has no distinction. She wears an ugly dark gown designed more for utility than beauty, and her thin hair is brushed back till it is quite smooth and tight on her skull.]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It is not yet day, mother.

THE QUEEN. It is never yet day when we assemble for our morning food. That is our custom as it was the custom of our father, the King, thy grandfather, and of his father, the King, our grandfather, thy great-grandfather. The candles should have been lighted.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. I will light them. Bring me a taper. [*She speaks to the Scullion who has entered with a platter of meat which he places upon the table. He bows to the Princess and goes out.*]

THE QUEEN. The dawn is grey. The day may be stormy.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Whether the day be stormy or fair, it is well to be prepared.

[*The Scullion returns with a taper, which she takes from him and goes about lighting the three candles on the table and the one tall thick one by the window, while the Queen and the Scullion watch her as she moves deliberately, methodically.*]

THE QUEEN. It is better.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Now we have light.

THE QUEEN. It is lighter. [*She surveys the candles and then goes to the window again and looks out.*] It is lighter within but not yet light without. That is as it should be for the morning

meal. [*She returns and looks about and at the table.*] It is all as it was in the time of our father, the King, when we were the princess. But no, no, no, [*she moans*] it is not as it was then.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Mother, it can not be as it was then.

THE QUEEN. Why, why? Thy sister, Agravaine, hears strange sounds, she looks in her glass and sees visions and smiles, she dreams in her sleep of what is to come. She makes us tremble. We would we were a little maid in the time of our father, the King. We were rich. We were happy. Our habits should not change. Life should not change. And now we are poor and Agravaine sees strange things.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Hist! Thou shouldst not speak so before the servants. [*As the Scullion enters again bearing a loaf of bread and a tankard.*] We have much land — much. [*After a pause, when the scullion goes out.*] If we part with some of it for a goodly ransom we can the better tend what is left.

THE QUEEN [*seating herself with dignity at the back of the table where the two chairs are*]. We will part with none of our estates. No, not with one woodland, not with one wheatfield, not with one corner of a meadow big enough only for a lark's nest. Our broad fields and rich forests were the hunting-grounds of our noble father, the King. We will part with none of it.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*petulantly*]. He hunted always and gave banquets.

THE QUEEN [*nodding*]. For that is the life of a king.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Oh, it is the cause of our circumstances now.

THE QUEEN. The life of a king is to hunt, hold feasts at arms, give banquets, wage wars. It is seemly.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thy father did not wage wars. He only hunted and banqueted. [*She takes her seat at the end of the table towards the sleeping apartments.*]

THE QUEEN. He was noble, he lived as a king may live, and we, the little princess, were his pride, his delight. We were very beautiful with shining black eyes and shining golden hair and he would laugh and sing to us and call us his little princeling. Having no sons, we were his sole delight. In the dewy morning in the springtime when the fields were gay with daisies and the hawthorns blithe with birdsong, he would ride forth with us in front of him on the saddle. And in the evening when he drank his ale he still kept us with him. Even at his banquets when neighboring kings were his visitors at the table, he would set us upon his knee to hear the tales and the songs his harper sang. Those days are gone. We have no harper now.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Because there was nothing but banqueting then. Thy father let gold slip through his fingers.

THE QUEEN. He was noble as was the Prince, thy father, who came to woo us.

[*The second princess, Agravaine, enters from the passage leading to the bed-chambers. She is tall and slender and fairer, with a pale skin and tender lips. She is graceful, wearing a beautiful gown of silk in soft tints of*

lavender and green, and she leads her little hound by a silver chain. Gliding behind the Queen and past her, she takes the chair at the other side of the table opposite the Princess Modrehard, pulling the chair away from the table and placing her feet on the footstool. She leans back languidly and pays little heed to the others. Just as she enters Modrehard is saying.]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. The Prince, my father, was killed in a drunken brawl.

THE QUEEN. Hush! Hush!

PRINCESS MODREHARD. But had he lived, he would have spent all our gold and parted with all our estates. It is perhaps well he died young — at least we have the land left.

THE QUEEN. Hush! Hush!

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. The Prince, my father, was gay and fair and handsome. His eyes laughed. If he had lived perchance these walls would be fraught with light.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*sneeringly*]. Thou knowest his death was upon his own head.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Better a short life where pleasure is than length of days and bitterness therewith.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*still petulantly*]. Oh, thou knowest he was drunken most of the time and thou knowest, mother, that he had many loves.

THE QUEEN. Hush! Hush! Peace be with his soul! [*She crosses herself.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. He was always either drunken or making love to some wench, or both at the same time. He had a sweetheart under

every bush. Heaven knows how many of his children — brothers and sisters to us — are servants in neighboring kingdoms.

THE QUEEN. Oh, say not so. Peace be to his soul!

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. His soul is happy. [*She looks straight ahead of her as if seeing a vision, and stares with open, smiling lips. The Queen looks at her uneasily.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*to her sister*]. The Queen refuses again to part with any of our lands.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Mother, thou shouldst be more world-wise — but then thou wouldst not be a queen. [*Smiling.*]

THE QUEEN. Oh, if your brother, the Prince, had lived, you would not dare to ask us to part with our estates.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I am not asking thee.

THE QUEEN. If your little brother, the Prince, had lived, all would be well.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Our brother, the Prince, was little more than half-witted. It is well he did not live.

THE QUEEN. Oh, Modrehard, shame upon thee! Thou dost cast insult upon thy grandfather and upon thy father and upon thy brother.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. I insult no one. They are dead. They are not here.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Art thou so sure?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Why talk of the dead? The scorching suns of summers past and the blighting frosts of winters are over and gone. Let us talk of the living.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Why talk of the living? Why talk at all? Why not sing? Will not the scorching suns of summers come again just as before and the freezing winters?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It is well to be prepared.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. How mayst thou prepare against death? Thou mayst prepare thy soul, mayhap, but not thy body. Death comes whether thou hast thy shoes on or off.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It is not death I think of.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*laughing*]. No, thou thinkest of lands. But is not everything death? The scorching and the freezing thou talkest of — are they not death? Prepare all thou canst, rains fall and destroy thy grain, insects devour it, rust comes, thunderbolts strike down thy trees, winds blow down thy trees and houses, flooded rivers drown thy cattle, scorching suns blight and bitter freezings kill, and it is all death.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thou talkest as a silly old decrepit fool might, Agravaine. I wish to consider our little sister, Illacette and talk of her.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Why not talk of our little brother, Leomontaigne?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. How foolish thou art, Agravaine. He is dead and gone.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Is he dead? But he went with his companion just as she will go with hers.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. She? Who?

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Our sister, Illacette.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. She will go with him if we do not prevent it. But we must prevent it.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Thou canst not prevent it. [*Laughing.*] How foolish thou art, Modrehard. Thou canst not separate us from our own familiars. [*She gazes straight out again as if she saw a vision.*] Leomontaigne has quite gone away with his.

THE QUEEN. The little Prince, our son, had no companion but ourselves. We never saw any one with him, he went away with no one.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Did he not? Didst thou never see any one with him?

THE QUEEN. No, no.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Yet Leomontaigne went with his familiar as we all will do. He was dressed strangely in garments of sinister stripes in different shades of blood.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Agravaine, thou art jesting?

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I never jest with thee, sister. Thy wise thunderbolts would curdle the cream of a jest. It is quite true that Leomontaigne played with him in the shadows.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. If I had known it I should have had the fellow beaten soundly and chased away or else slain outright.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Oh, thou canst not have such a creature slain.

THE QUEEN. If we had known of it, we should have prayed against him at the time of the new moon and burned him in candles three nights running.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Prayers would have no

power over the companion of the little Leomontaigne.

THE QUEEN. Cat's claws, feathers of the tawny owl, fangs of three snakes all dipped in the dew of moleswort on the Hallowe'en are a potent charm. We would have put them into the pillow of our little Prince to guard him from all evil spirits and wicked men.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. It was not at the time of Hallowe'en, but in the dewy fragrant spring when all things of evil portent come. Nor is there a charm potent enough to have protected the little Leomontaigne from his own familiar.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. There is no such man. I did not see him ever nor hear him. [*She rises and begins to carve the meat. The Scullion enters with a pitcher of milk which he places on the table. He goes out again. The Queen pours out milk into a goblet and sets it on the end of the table nearest to the Princess Agravaine.*]

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Thou dost not see because thine eyes are too full of their own plans. Thou dost not hear because thine ears are too full of the voice of thine own wishes.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Pooh, pooh! Silly girl.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. The night Leomontaigne died I heard a tapping at the door. [*She pauses as if listening.*] Didst thou not hear it? [*To the Queen.*]

THE QUEEN [*intensely and forgetting her majesty*]. Oh, we do not know, we do not know!

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I heard it and then I saw the familiar enter —

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*in the most practical tone of voice*]. I heard no one and saw no one. Therefore there was no one. There was no one. The door was shut.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I saw him enter and play with the boy as I have so often seen him play with him.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. There was no one.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Art thou so sure? Didst thou never see him playing with Leomontaigne in the sunlight and shadows among the beech trees and running after him down the garden paths?

THE QUEEN [*trembling*]. Oh, do not talk of these things. Drink thy milk.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I do not want my milk. I can not drink it. My familiar will not let me drink it. [*Laughing.*]

THE QUEEN [*starting*]. Oh, what dost thou mean?

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*laughing*]. My familiar will not let me drink the milk. He is holding me back. His arms are about me.

THE QUEEN [*trembling*]. We see nothing. [*Catching the arm of Modrehard.*] Oh, Modrehard, we see no one. Do we see any one? Dost thou see any one?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Surely not. Not I. There is no one.

THE QUEEN [*with a resumption of her dignity*]. We, the Queen, see no one.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*indifferently*]. It is not light enough for thee. Nevertheless he is here holding me. He holds me tight in his arms as the

little Leomontaigne's familiar held him, as Illacette's will hold her. He does not let me drink the milk, he will finally not let me eat and drink at all. But what difference is there? We pass into the beyond in one way or in another and the beyond is here with us before and after. If it had been the seneschal who strangled the little Leomontaigne in his bed, it would have been the same.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. The seneschal would never do that. He is an honest man, worthy to be trusted.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Surely not. Thou art so imaginative and amusing, my sister, Modrehard.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*seating herself again*]. Let us talk of Illacette.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Thou wilt talk only of what thou dost wish to talk. Yet, sweet sister, we have talked of Leomontaigne of whom thou didst not wish to talk. [*She smiles and plays with her little hound.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It will be well to have thy little hound killed. For if it should become sick again, thou wouldst send for the stable-boy to come back to cure it.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I will not have my little hound killed. It was given to me by my first lover many years ago. As one grows older one has fewer lovers and the gifts of the early lovers are pleasant to keep about to remind one of the time when one was fair and had firm breasts and a smooth skin.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Then I will have the dog killed so that thou wilt not be again tempted

to send for the stable-boy. [*She breaks the loaf of bread into pieces.*]

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I will not suffer thee to touch my dog. My dog sees with me the things I see. His eyes are keener than the stupid eyes of men. But I will never again send for the stable-boy.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*scornfully*]. Oh, thou *sayest* so!

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Though he was an excellent stable-boy.

THE QUEEN. He was an excellent stable-boy, a capable trainer of horses and dogs, the most obedient and humble servant we have ever had.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It was not humble in him to wish to wed our sister, the Princess Illacette.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. She, too, wished to wed him.

THE QUEEN. She was too young to know that a princess may not wed a stable-boy.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. A princess is never too young to know that she may not wed a stable-boy. It was something else.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. It was her familiar, her companion, who wished her to wed him, who persuaded her to. Her familiar lay with Illacette in the night and whispered dreams to her.

[*The Queen and Modrehard stare at Agravaine.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Illacette has been in a convent, carefully watched and guarded.

THE QUEEN. Most carefully watched and guarded always in the convent.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. And here in the castle before thou broughtest the stable-boy there was no one she spoke to. She always slept alone.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*smiling*]. Nevertheless, her familiar lay with her and talked to her of the stable-boy, telling her how young and straight and tall and slim and manly he was.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thou talkest foolishness, as ever, Agravaine. Illacette had no companion.

THE QUEEN [*nervously*]. She had no companion. Say, again, Modrehard, that she had no companion.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It is true, she had no companion.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*rising and touching the Queen on the shoulder*]. Art thou so very sure, mother, that thou didst never see any one with her? [*She stands away from the Queen and on one side, first with lowered head and then raising her head slowly and looking straight in front of her as if she saw a vision. The Queen gazes at her raptly.*] Didst thou never hear any one whispering to her among the bushes? Never down along the walk among the furze? Didst thou never hear steps going after her in the tower? Didst thou never see her dancing with some one in the moonlight over the grassy court?

THE QUEEN [*trembling and violently moved*]. Oh, I think I might have — a shadow — Oh, I do not know — Oh, Modrehard, I do not know?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thou didst hear and see nothing, for there was nothing. Nothing but

the stable-boy and him I sent away at once into the kingdom of Metchnikofia.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*taking her chair again and staring at the floor with a smile on her face*]. And so the Princess Illacette went mad because he was the only young man here about.

THE QUEEN. She could not be permitted to wed a stable-boy.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. She will wed some one. Listen! I hear the galloping of horses over a field!

[*The Queen gazes at Agravaine, frightened.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thou couldst not hear such a noise so far away. We were speaking of Illacette. She is no longer mad. She has regained her wits and come home from the convent. She must be watched lest this stable-boy returns.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Canst thou control the rays of the sun or the waves of the sea? Neither canst thou watch over one who has a secret ally. The stable-boy will come back, as the moons come.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Then thy hound must be killed.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. It is not my dog that will bring them together but Illacette's companion.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Then, if there be a companion, she must be intercepted and caught and thrown into a dungeon.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. But this creature is too crafty. Canst thou catch the wind? Canst thou tell why a robin is hatched out of a robin's egg?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Because robins produce robins, as snakes produce snakes.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Ah, yes, but why do

they? Why do they not produce other kinds of birds or animals? Thou canst only say that it is so. And thou canst never lay hands upon Illacette's familiar. Listen! I hear horses' hoofs trotting on the road down below!

PRINCESS MODREHARD. I hear no horses. Who would be coming here to our castle?

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Nevertheless, I hear them.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Since thou hast seen Illacette's familiar so plainly thou must catch her for us.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*smiling and shaking her head*]. That I can never do. My own dear familiar will not let me. He holds me fast.

THE QUEEN [*excitedly*]. She is talking of her familiar again. What is it? She makes us cold — we tremble. She may make us see what she sees! Oh, Modrehard, perhaps there is some one near her? Canst thou hear or see any one?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. No, I can see no one. There is no one. She was always strange. She is not one to heed.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Those who are strange see the truth.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*with scornful sarcasm*]. Perhaps thou wilt wed with thy familiar.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. No, I will not wed him. We do not wed our familiars. Besides, it is pleasanter to have lovers than husbands who will kill the lovers. No, I shall not wed, I shall ride and train dogs and —

THE QUEEN [*severely*]. It would be more

seemly if thou wouldst do fine sewing and embroidery as other maidens do.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Mother is right. If thou wouldst but sew and embroider and spin and weave and cook, thou wouldst have no time for seeing strange things and thou wouldst get over thy foolish imaginings.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. I shall ride and train dogs and love, perchance, and sleep till soon I go hence with my companion. But thou, Modrehard, thou wilt wed a lusty yeoman, much younger than thyself and handsomer, of unmitigated and common yeoman strain, and thou wilt bear lusty children and retrieve thy fallen fortunes after the rest of us have gone hence. Yet it will be a tiresome, simple, yeoman's life thou wilt lead, Modrehard, with none of the huntings and jousts and feasts, none of the sweet music and merriment, none of the dear life of kings.

THE QUEEN. Who has foretold this to thee? For my children must always lead the life of kings as their fathers have and none of them must wed with yeomen.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Nevertheless, what I have said will come to pass, for my familiar has told it to me. Listen! I hear the sound of horses' galloping! I hear their neighs. There are two of them.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. All this is idle. Let us talk of how we may prevent Illacette from wedding the stable-boy.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Canst thou prevent water from falling down a precipice? I have said

it. Thou canst not prevent Illacette from wedding, for her familiar wills it so.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Then, if thou talkest this way and thou wilt not have thy little hound killed, thou must fare away into a distant kingdom with Illacette where there will be no fear from the stable-boy.

THE QUEEN. Not Metchnikofia, for the stable-boy is there.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*smiling and shaking her head*]. Thou art swift to send other folk into distant lands. Dost thou think one does not take one's shadow into the sunlight of Metchnikofia or even Freudland? I think our father, the Prince, had some of his pleasurings in Metchnikofia and in Freudland, as well. But I shall not go. I am employed with my own familiar, let Illacette be with hers.

THE QUEEN. We desire the presence of Illacette at once, here at the table now. We never kept our father, the King, waiting.

PRINCESS AGAVAINE. Listen! I hear the noise of some one in the outer hall!

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Surely there are noises in the castle. It might be the seneschal or the scullion. But there is no noise. I hear nothing.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. It is not the seneschal or the scullion. It is Illacette's familiar. I hear her familiar laughing. Listen!

[*The Queen looks terrified.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. It is nothing.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. But hear it!

PRINCESS MODREHARD. There is no one. Tomorrow I shall have more locks and bolts put upon the doors. And tonight Illacette shall sleep with me.

[*The Princess Illacette enters. She is a young girl, small and slight yet fully developed, with prominent yellowish eyes. She seems greatly excited and stands looking at them slyly.*]

THE QUEEN. Oh, Illacette, thou art so very late.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. I am a little late.

THE QUEEN. It was never our way to keep the King, our father, waiting.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, mother, thou hast said that so many times before. And it is evident I have not kept you waiting. [*She looks furtively from one to the other.*]

THE QUEEN. Why didst thou not come to thy morning meal with us?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*with a strange little laugh*]. Oh, I did not desire food.

THE QUEEN. Didst thou only now arise from thy lazy bed?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*laughing*]. Oh, no. I was up betimes.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*sternly*]. Child, where hast thou been?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. I have been with the Holy Father.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*teasingly*]. What? Didst thou have to confess thy many sins so early, Illacette?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. No, no, I did not go merely to confess sins. Sins? Oh, what are

they? One does not arise early in the morning to confess sins. I had a more important and urgent errand.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Illacette, be plain.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, I may as well tell you. I went to the Holy Father to be wed.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. To be wed?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*laughing*]. Yes, I am a married woman now, I am a wife, which neither of you are. The Holy Father pronounced me a wife not one-half hour ago.

THE QUEEN [*crossing herself*]. Oh, Holy Mother, help us! [*She groans and continues to sit swaying and moaning.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Child, thou art but jesting?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Not I. But did I not steal a march on you? By St. Joseph, did I not? [*Laughing ripplingly, gayly.*]

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*fiercely, turning to Agravaine*]. This is *thy* doing. Thou knewest of this stable-boy's return.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. No, I did not. But ask her familiar for the cause.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Where is he, this stable-boy?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*opening her eyes wide and innocently*]. What stable-boy?

PRINCESS MODREHARD. This low lout, this groom of horses whom thou hast wed.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, oh, oh, I remember — but I had quite forgot him. No, no, no, I have not wed him. I would never wed him.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. But only a few

months ago it was thy ardent desire to wed him.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. I had forgotten.

PRINCESS MODREHARD [*in great excitement*]. Who is it, then? Oh, Illacette, Illacette, speak!

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*throwing back her head proudly*]. My husband is the clown at the court of the kingdom of Freudland.

THE QUEEN [*screaming*]. Oh, heaven, that our daughter, the daughter of kings, should wed a clown!

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, but he is a man of infinite jest.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. Her familiar is merciless. This jester is touched by the King's Evil, he is not strong of limb, and he has a hump.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, but he is young and gay.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. The Holy Father — how could he permit it?

PRINCESS ILLACETTE [*laughing again*]. Oh, oh, oh, he did not know.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE. There was perhaps not light enough.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. We are wed, we are wed, I am wed! And we will not stay here in this worm-eaten old dungeon where there is nothing but law and gloom and "thou must nots." We are going away, far away to the south, to the kingdom of Metchnikofia where everything is sunny and all is gay.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. But thou hast no gold. Thou art poor.

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, my jester will find a way and thou shalt send gold after us. He has

stolen some horses and awaits me even now at the end of the wood.

THE QUEEN [*weeping and groaning*]. Oh, my daughter! My daughter!

PRINCESS MODREHARD. I command thee to stay! Thou canst not go!

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. Oh, can I not? For I am wed, I am wed! I am free of thee. Listen! [*A hunting-horn is heard.*] There, I hear his horn now — the hunting-horn that he stole so adroitly from your sleeping seneschal. He is impatient. I must not make him wait.

THE QUEEN. Oh, our daughter, our daughter, our little princess, do not leave us.

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Thou shalt *not* go!

PRINCESS ILLACETTE. I go! [*She laughs and goes. The Queen shrieks and faints, the Princess Modrehard rushes to her mother's assistance, the Princess Agravaine sits unmoved*].

PRINCESS MODREHARD. Agravaine, do not let her go. Hold her, detain her.

PRINCESS AGRAVAINE [*smiling, unmoved*]. But my own dear familiar holds me.

[CURTAIN]

IN MENDELESIA

Part II

CHARACTERS

Madame Worthington.
Katherine, }
Ethel, } *her daughters.*
Grace, }
Julia, *a maid.*

[*The stage represents the dining-room of a handsome apartment in an eastern city of these United States. Bright sunlight floods the room. Doors open on either side. On the left there is one to the bed-rooms, another to the butler's pantry; on the right, one to the library and drawing-room, another to the hall. At the back two large windows look down on the street. A canary bird in a large gilt cage hangs by one window, a large glass bowl of gold fish stands on a table by the other. A screen is in front of the door to the pantry. Gay, flowered paper with cockatoos and birds of paradise on it covers the wall, the furniture is red mahogany polished. In the center of the room is a table laid for breakfast for four, with chairs drawn up. There are lace doilies and dainty china. A low bowl of flowers is in the center, a shining silver*

basket of fruit at one end, a shining silver percolator coffee pot stands at the other. The whole room seems to shine. An old lady enters from the bed-rooms and goes to the table examining the things on it with her lorgnette. She is in no way an exceptional old lady, grey-haired, good-looking, well-preserved, she is the representative of a once virile, still rich, but decaying, blue-blooded family. She has distinction, poise, the selfishness of her birth, and a front that hides brains or the lack of them. She is dressed in a very pretty, gay, lavender morning gown and wears a little lace cap with a lavender bow over the bald spot on her head. She scans the things on the table through her lorgnette and converses with herself.]

MADAME WORTHINGTON. There, she's used that little blue pitcher again. It will surely get broken, if she keeps on putting it on the table for every day wear. I've told her again and again not to use it. I suppose she thinks it is a cheap little thing and of course it wasn't expensive, but my brother William brought it to me from Stockholm. [*Slight pause.*] With the war going on, it is doubtful if we ever get any more china from abroad. American china is *so* yellow and coarse. Oh, this dreadful war! [*Slight pause.*] I wonder where the morning paper is? [*She looks hopelessly on the table and chairs as one who is not accustomed to being able to find things for herself.*] She never leaves it where I can find it. I believe she takes it to the kitchen for them to read. I'll have to speak to her about it. [*Enter*

a very pretty, rosy-cheeked, immaculate maid.] Good morning, Julia.

JULIA. Good morning, ma'am. Will you have your breakfast now, ma'am?

MADAME [*in a very much injured tone*]. Have it now? Why, certainly, Julia. I've been waiting for it till I'm quite faint. I should think you might have heard me moving about in here. I've been here for a half hour.

JULIA. Oh, dear me, ma'am, you didn't ring the bell.

MADAME. You oughtn't to expect me to ring. Cook ought to have the breakfast ready and you ought to be watching for me to come in. You know I'm always prompt. Where have you put the morning paper?

JULIA. I think Miss Katherine has it in the library.

MADAME. Oh, she's up, then.

[*Julia goes out behind the screen to the butler's pantry.*]

MADAME [*talking to herself again*]. Katherine has taken the paper and I wanted to read the war news. I wonder if the Germans are in Paris yet or if the English have entered Berlin. Dear me, there will be no more French china nor Dresden shepherdesses brought over. Dear me, this war! [*Slight pause.*] Julia is a neat maid, but I do wish she wouldn't wear her cap on one side of her head. It gives her a fast look. I shall have to speak to her about it.

[*Katherine, the eldest daughter, comes in from the library. She is a young woman of thirty, has been to college, is nervously striving to*

retrieve the oozing brains and fortunes of the family, and as a result she follows the tail-feathers of every scientific fad that comes along. She is fully dressed for the day in a neat shirt-waist and tailored skirt and wears large tortoise-shell glasses.]

KATHERINE. Good morning, mother.

MADAME. Good morning, Katherine.

[*Madame is about to seat herself by the coffee-pot and pour herself out a cup of the steaming beverage, but Katherine carefully steers her off and places her in another chair at the side of the table, herself taking her place at the side of the coffee-pot to which she gives her attention.*]

MADAME. I do wish the girls would come to their meals more promptly.

KATHERINE. I approve of Grace's sleeping late. It is good for her to get as much sleep as possible.

[*The maid brings in a plate of buttered toast, also a platter with an ample supply of bacon and eggs and a dish of hashed brown potatoes, places them in front of Madame Worthington, and goes out again.*]

KATHERINE [*helping herself to a banana*]. Mother, I wish you would eat some sort of fruit for breakfast in the morning.

MADAME. I have never eaten fruit for breakfast in my life and I am not going to begin now.

KATHERINE. But, mother, it would be so good for you. Fruit is nature's own medicine. Surely you could not object to an orange or half a grapefruit.

MADAME. I *do* object to them — I always have. Besides, what you really want me to eat is a banana — I know. And bananas throw many people into fits.

[*Ethel comes in from the left through the door to the bed-rooms. She is the second daughter, about twenty-seven years old, tall, slender, willowy, sallow, in delicate health always and always with an acrimonious temper and tongue, but also with a certain disconcerting fascination. She wears a most elaborate morning-gown and carries a little white fluffy, newly washed poodle dog in her arms. The others greet her.*]

ETHEL. Morning!

MADAME. Ethel, I do wish you would try to get down a little earlier to your breakfast. It puts the whole day back.

ETHEL [*drawling in a soft musical voice*]. Well, why shouldn't it put it back? What difference does it make? What difference on earth does it make? [*She pulls the chair opposite to her sister far back from the table and sits down.*] There isn't a single thing any of us have to do.

KATHERINE. It would be very much better for us if there were.

ETHEL. But distinctly unpleasant. I loathe keeping up this defunct custom of breakfasting together. There isn't another family I know that does it. It's absurd.

MADAME. I have been accustomed all my life to my family assembling for breakfast together.

ETHEL. Well, then, it would seem almost time to give it up.

KATHERINE. I wonder if there is anything the matter with Grace?

ETHEL [*playing with her dog's ears and laughing*]. That's such a funny question for you to ask when you *know* there is something the matter with her.

[*The maid enters with a dish of cereal.*]

KATHERINE [*with a glance at the maid and looking crossly at Ethel*]. Oh, *do* hush!

MADAME. Ethel, hush! [*Both look alarmed.*]

KATHERINE [*hastily*]. I — I — didn't mean that — I meant — anything to keep her from breakfast. [*Katherine and Madame both busy themselves self-consciously with breakfast details, Katherine frowning across the table at Ethel.*]

ETHEL [*still laughing*]. Why, she's always late to breakfast, you know that.

MADAME [*hastily to Ethel*]. My dear, won't *you* have a banana?

ETHEL. No, mother darling, I may skate to my death on the outside of one, but that won't be my crime.

[*The maid goes out.*]

KATHERINE. Ethel, you are so tactless before the servants.

ETHEL. You brought it on yourself by asking in that idiotically innocent way if there could be anything the matter with Grace when you know perfectly well —

KATHERINE [*interrupting*]. Sh!

ETHEL. When you know perfectly well that she is insane.

MADAME. Oh, my *dear,* don't call it *that!*

ETHEL. Well, it *is* that, isn't it? I don't talk about it at teas and dinners, telling people that my sister has lost her mind about a dog-doctor, though Heaven knows I might as well, for everybody knows it, but there is no use begging the question in the family.

KATHERINE. If it hadn't been for you and your silly little dog, that odious man would never have entered our house.

ETHEL [*her voice is always soft and sweet and drawling*]. Well, by Jove, am I to be blamed because my silly little sister falls in love with an utterly gauche young veterinarian who comes to administer worm-pills to my puppy? Poor Fifi! You know very well that was the mere accident. And that Grace is the sort of girl who will fall in love with *some*body, whoever happens to turn up.

KATHERINE. Do hush! Don't talk so loud, Julia will hear you.

ETHEL. Well, good heavens, why shouldn't she? All the servants know. They couldn't possibly live for six months in a house with two trained nurses and ever so many nerve specialists every few minutes and a person as wild as Grace and not know all about it. They've got enormous wages on account of it — they haven't missed noticing that.

KATHERINE. Ethel, you talk so foolishly sometimes I think you are almost as bad as Grace.

ETHEL. Probably I am. In all likelihood, I'm insane, too. You say you have discovered a taint in the family, but it strikes me these scientific days it is easier to find a taint in a family than to find a family without one.

MADAME. Oh, I *do* wish you girls wouldn't quarrel so at the table! All your quarreling upsets my digestion. I *do* like to have my meals in peace.

ETHEL. Why breakfast together, then?

KATHERINE. Mother dear, you need more strength of will, more self-control, more poise, so that any discussion would not disturb you. If you would lead the physical life I advise, all your processes would become normal and unimpaired. You need more stamina.

ETHEL [*laughing*]. *Stamina?* Good heavens, she has more stamina now than all of us put together.

KATHERINE. She would be a hundred per cent. better if she followed my advice and adopted a diet of nuts and took that course in spinal developing dancing, and slept every night out on the sleeping-porch.

MADAME. Nuts get under my plate.

KATHERINE. Oh, well, that makes no difference — Julia always clears the table nicely.

MADAME. I don't mean my china plate from which I eat, but my gold plate — the gold plate of my lower teeth. Nuts get under it.

ETHEL. A diet of nuts makes you feel like a squirrel, anyway.

MADAME. And in my day it would have been considered indecent for an elderly lady to take dancing lessons. And as for sleeping out of doors, people never used to sleep with their windows open at all and they were much healthier than people are nowadays. You've made me give up my grandmother's mahogany bedstead for

sterilized brass and I will go no further. Besides, I dislike to get awake in the morning and find my nostrils black with soot.

ETHEL. Katherine, do you mind giving me a cup of coffee?

MADAME [*sighing*]. Ethel, I *do* wish you would eat some breakfast.

KATHERINE. She ate a box of chocolates just before going to bed at midnight last night, so it isn't much wonder she has no appetite for her breakfast.

ETHEL. If you didn't insist upon my coming to the table, you wouldn't know whether I eat any breakfast or not and it wouldn't worry you. I don't see why your scientific mind fusses over me anyway, Katherine. I am not going to have babies.

KATHERINE. I am not so sure. Mother was nearly forty when she was married.

ETHEL. I suppose that explains why you were born middle-aged and never got over it.

KATHERINE. It may explain more than you think, you ignoramus.

ETHEL. Poor little Grace, coming twelve years later, entered immediately upon an existence of *second* childhood. That's it. That's what's the matter with her — one of those peculiar cases of heredity. Why don't you write to your deity you call Freud about it?

KATHERINE [*smiling sarcastically*]. In your utterly fatuous way you are much nearer the truth than you have any idea of. We are a family of four.

ETHEL. Why count Reginald? He wasn't a

full-sized anything. You might say we are a family of three and a half — even that is being generous to Reginald. Why count him at all?

KATHERINE. Of course, Reginald, being the weakest, died in infancy.

MADAME [*pulling out a lace handkerchief and weeping*]. Oh, I cannot *bear* you to speak of your little brother! Oh! If he had lived all would have been different.

KATHERINE. Why, mother, you like to talk about him yourself.

MADAME. Oh, yes, but that is quite different from having him brought up so unexpectedly at the breakfast table! [*She dabs her eyes and takes a bite of breakfast bacon. All through she eats heartily, while Ethel eats nothing at all, and Katherine partakes of grapes and a cereal. Also, all the way through Madame bestows reproving or shocked glances to right or left on either daughter, as the case may be, and exclaims,* "Oh, my dear!" *or* "Oh, Katherine!" "Ethel," etc., *in an extremity of helpless dismay.*]

KATHERINE. I was going to say, though I don't suppose I shall be understood, that we are a family of four, counting Reginald —

ETHEL [*interrupting and grinning*]. Katherine in the rôle of the little cottage girl. You know it always seemed to me Wordsworth's little cottage girl — she'd be a little bungalow girl today, wouldn't she? There isn't a cottage left anywhere — that she was very stupid and obstinate. I never sympathized with her in the least.

"I met a little cottage girl,
She was eight years old she *said*,"— that

was keen of Wordsworth because he knew that girls never tell their right ages —

"Her hair was red — ah, very red,"— no, that isn't exactly it. I've forgotten the next line. Her hair couldn't have been red or she would have been smarter. But she was young — Katherine, you are more than eight — you couldn't even make it eighteen and carry it off. And it is pure stubbornness in you to insist on Reginald.

KATHERINE. If you have stopped your maunderings I will go on to explain. Reginald would have to be counted, for he lived a year, though perhaps mentally and physically subnormal — which, however, only proves the rule. You see, there are four of us, and I am the only perfectly normal one. The law is really so strange and beautiful. [*She relapses for a moment into a beatific contemplation of the law.*]

ETHEL. Ah? I could tell that without going to college. Normal people are so dumb. You'll never come to a bad end, Katherine, you're too normal and dumb.

KATHERINE [*angrily recovering from her beatific contemplation*]. Ethel, you are so silly sometimes it is difficult to have patience with you.

ETHEL. You want to throw a plate at me? Well, do it. It would make you livelier and more interesting.

MADAME. Oh, I *do* wish you wouldn't wrangle so.

KATHERINE. Wrangle? *I never* wrangle. Mother, will you ring for a finger-bowl for me? Julia forgot to place one at my plate.

ETHEL. She gave me one. I suppose she thought it was all I needed. Take it. [*She sips her coffee and plays with her dog.*]

KATHERINE. I think Grace must have decided not to get up for breakfast. It is just as well. She needs the sleep.

ETHEL. Oh, don't worry. She'll come in any minute.

KATHERINE. And now that we are all together and she is absent, we will discuss the situation.

ETHEL. Oh, joy!

MADAME. Why do you always bring up unpleasant subjects at the table?

KATHERINE. Well, we must talk about it while we are all together.

ETHEL. *Together?* We are *always* together. That is the terrible part of it.

MADAME [*leaning back dejectedly*]. If you discuss Grace now and her illness while I am eating my breakfast it will give me an indigestion. It always does every time you do it. I don't want to have an indigestion this morning.

KATHERINE. I am very sorry, mother, but we must discuss the situation and decide upon a course of action. We have come to a crisis.

ETHEL. Oh, we are always coming to a crisis. We get a crisis the way other people get a puncture.

KATHERINE. Please try to be serious. We must come to a conclusion. Grace may appear at any moment.

ETHEL. What of it? She has come in often

and found us talking about her. Indeed we are quite in the habit of discussing her right before her face.

KATHERINE. But can't you see? She is improving now, nearly well, and we must make plans for her future.

ETHEL. Oh, I don't know. If she is improving, why shouldn't she perhaps decide it for herself? Why shouldn't people be allowed to hang themselves in their own way, anyhow?

MADAME. She is a mere child.

KATHERINE. She will never be anything else mentally.

ETHEL. Oh, I am not so sure. Sometimes I wonder if she ever was insane at all or just bedeviled.

[*The maid enters with a plate of rolls. Madame helps herself to them.*]

KATHERINE. Sh!

MADAME [*in a totally different and polite society voice*]. As I was saying, I want the car this afternoon to go down town and buy that wedding present for your cousin John's niece, and after that I may make some calls.

KATHERINE [*in a totally different and polite society voice*]. Mother, dear, I will go with you and we will get that call made at the Spragues' and then see about the framing of Aunt Belle's picture.

ETHEL [*imitating them mischievously*]. And, dears, I will go with you if you will kindly drop me at the Country Club, where I promised to meet Eddy Wilmot for tea. [*The maid goes out and Ethel relapses into her former tone.*] Oh,

mother, but you and your eldest offspring are the diplomats!

KATHERINE [*disgustedly*]. Ethel, you are positively impossible. Do try now to use what little mentality you have.

ETHEL [*shrugging her shoulders*]. There you are! [*Pushing back her chair.*] I know I am not bright, but then the majority of people are not bright. What is the use in rubbing in my limitations all the time? You've studied psychology and Freud and all that stuff and then you pick on your family tree like — er — using it like a laboratory — till you think we've all got the dry rot.

MADAME. Oh, my dear!

KATHERINE. You mix your metaphors.

ETHEL. I don't give a whoop if I do. I'll mix them as much as I like. Metaphors don't have babies, do they? You have us all bluffed. You treat mother as if she needed a wet nurse and me as if I ought to be in an imbecile asylum and Grace as if she belonged in a strong ward. And Grace is a pretty girl.

KATHERINE. Well, what has that got to do with it?

ETHEL. Only that this perfectly awful young man fell in love with her and others will. Oh, I grant he is green enough to be a vegetarian instead of a veterinarian, that he is perfectly impossible and I don't want him for a brother-in-law, but the fact is they were engaged and you and mother stood up on your hind legs and clawed the air —

MADAME [*utterly scandalized*]. Ethel, my *dear!*

KATHERINE [*in complete irritation and disgust*]. Oh, do stop!

ETHEL. — And had spasms — mother especially threw fit after fit on account of the family — great-grandfather Morton and great-grandmother Hamilton and grandfather Livermore and great-grandaunt Ellis and Uncle Jeremiah Gates and the Fitzgerald and Randolph branches of the family and all the rest of them, till poor Grace broke down and had nervous prostration. And then you say she is insane and must never marry anybody at all because it would be criminal —

MADAME. Oh, my dear, please!

ETHEL.— to generate little insane babies, because great-grand-uncle Hannibal committed suicide — when you know perfectly well he was gloriously drunk when he did it and didn't in the least realize what he was about and wouldn't have killed himself for the world if he had known.

[*The maid, Julia, enters with the mail, placing it on the corner of the table between Madame and Ethel, and goes out.*]

KATHERINE. Have you finished?

ETHEL. I am never sure I have.

KATHERINE. Because I should like to say that in the present crisis —

ETHEL. Crisis, oh, fudge!

KATHERINE [*looking around at the retreating form of the maid to be sure she is out of ear-shot, then proceeding*]. Grace is vastly improved. She is convalescent.

ETHEL. She is perfectly all right, if she ever

did have anything the matter with her head.

KATHERINE. Oh, you don't either of you seem to realize the enormity of the situation. We must make plans and settle everything for Grace — or, rather, I must, and you've got to agree to it.

ETHEL. I hope Fate's next incarnation won't be in my family. With Fate for a sister I become totally hopeless and Greek in my attitude to life.

KATHERINE. Grace is recovered and that young man has probably been waiting round and will be coming back.

ETHEL. You know he had really remarkable shoulders. He would look splendid in the saddle.

KATHERINE. Grace will be wanting to see him again.

MADAME. Oh, she must not be allowed to!

ETHEL. She'll probably do it sub-rosa. She's clever enough to trick you.

MADAME. Oh, but we must prevent her from entangling herself with that dreadful young person. We must direct her future.

KATHERINE. We must not oppose her too much for fear of bringing on a brain storm. So I've thought of a plan to get her safely out of the way. You, Ethel, can take her for a trip to California. I, of course, can not leave mother and the business and everything. But you can.

ETHEL. I? A happy thought for others — how like you! But I happen to loathe California and detest taking care of people. California is impossible — full of Chicago millionaires and so far away. If one could travel in Italy now — but, no, not even Italy would tempt me. [*She leans over and picks up the mail which her mother*

has paid no attention to, and opens one letter, starts in surprise and keeps the enclosure in her hand from this on to the end.] Of course, one can't travel in Italy now because of this detestable war, but not even Italy would tempt me under such circumstances.

KATHERINE. Well, would you consider Panama?

ETHEL. I understand they're not showing them this season.

KATHERINE. Ethel, you understand what I mean well enough. I don't mean hats.

ETHEL. But why go to Panama if one can't buy hats? No, I wouldn't consider anything. I don't want to go away from Mendelesia, that dear city of brotherly sin. Why should I just as it is getting pleasant at the Country Club? Anyhow, Grace seems perfectly happy. I never saw her so cheerful and larky as she has been this last week. Why, she has been just full of spirits.

KATHERINE. A very bad sign indeed.

ETHEL [*a slight noise is heard*]. Listen. Some one is coming.

KATHERINE. One of the maids in the hall. [*A door is closed. They listen. Steps are heard. In a few moments Grace enters dressed for the street. She is a very pretty girl of eighteen, shorter than Ethel, slenderer than Katherine, smiling, excited, and jumpy.*]

MADAME. Why, my dear, are you going out?

GRACE [*smiling and shaking her head*]. Oh, no, I've been. [*She goes to the window and looks out.*]

MADAME. What, so early?

GRACE. Yes.

ETHEL. What came over the spirit of your dream? You don't usually delight to roam abroad in the spring dawn.

GRACE. Oh, even you would for once.

ETHEL. One can do anything once.

GRACE. Oh! [*She waves delightedly to some one in the street below.*]

KATHERINE. Grace, you didn't go without your breakfast?

GRACE. I wasn't hungry. It was all right.

MADAME. Your nurse oughtn't to let you go without your breakfast.

KATHERINE. Where have you been?

GRACE. To early church. [*She waves again.*]

KATHERINE. Did your nurse take you?

GRACE [*giggling and shaking her head*]. No.

KATHERINE. Did you go alone?

GRACE [*still giggling and again shaking her head*]. No.

KATHERINE. Then *who* was with you?

GRACE [*turning from the window and facing them. She is smiling, gay, excited, with a bright light in her eyes*]. My *husband.* I'm *married!* [*She jumps up and down, waving her hands and laughing as if she had a great joke on them.*]

MADAME [*screaming*]. Oh! My child!

KATHERINE [*jumping to her feet*]. Grace!

ETHEL [*lazily*]. Well, by Jove!

GRACE. Yes, I'm married. I'm of age, you know. And we thought we wouldn't upset you all — you see I remember perfectly the tremendous fuss you made the last time — so he got the

license and everything on Saturday and we were married just now at the Little Church of the Angels.

ETHEL. Devils!

MADAME [*swaying and groaning violently as if she were going to faint or have a fit*]. Oh, my child! My child!

GRACE. Now don't carry on this time because it's no use. It's done. And he's the funniest boy in the world. He'll amuse you no end. You don't have to buy a phonograph or go to the vaudeville if you've got him.

KATHERINE. Whom are you talking about?

GRACE. My husband. We're on our way to Atlantic City to spend our honeymoon at the Marlborough-Blenheim. I just dropped in to tell you because I hate writing letters. There. I almost forgot to give you my new name so you will know our address. It is Mrs. Arthur Hart, the Marlborough-Blenheim, Atlantic City, New Jersey. [*Slowly and with much emphasis and unction.*]

KATHERINE. Arthur Hart. But that isn't the name of the veterinarian?

GRACE [*laughing*]. Of course not. Did you imagine I was still caring for that idiot? Oh, I got quite over him long ago.

ETHEL. Apparently he got over it, too, for here are his wedding-cards that just came in the mail. [*She shows the paper she has had in her hand since she opened the mail.*]

GRACE. How awfully funny!

ETHEL. Horrid, printed things — sent to us for spite probably.

[*Madame continues to moan and weep slightly at intervals, looking from one to the other of her daughters and exclaiming every now and then,* "Oh, my dear!"]

KATHERINE [*who has not taken her eyes from her youngest sister*]. But, Grace, who *is* this man?

GRACE. Well, his name is Arthur Hart, he's twenty-one and he's an Englishman. He used to do songs and dances in London music halls. They call him Harty Art — English cockney, you know. [*Laughing uproariously.*] He's *so* ludicrous. He was one of the entertainers, doing funny songs and dances and all kinds of stunts, at the Rochester Fields' very *outré* party a week ago, and it was there I saw him and fell in love with him and — well, we've been meeting in the park ever since.

MADAME [*hoarsely*]. Where was your nurse?

GRACE. Oh, we tipped her to keep her out of the way. She left for California this morning.

ETHEL. Another reason for staying away from California.

MADAME. Traitress!

GRACE. You'll have to send us a lot of money to the Marlborough-Blenheim, for of course Arthur will have to give up his work in the cabarets now — you wouldn't want your son to keep on there — and he's so awfully gay and jolly and free with money. He'll need heaps and heaps of it to keep him going. And besides, he's got a little touch of tuberculosis.

KATHERINE [*groaning*]. Oh!

ETHEL. This is a million times worse than the other.

GRACE. I am not going to kiss you good-by. You would just make a scene. [*An automobile is heard honking in the street below.*] There is Arthur's horn now. [*She starts to go.*]

KATHERINE. Grace! Wait! You *mustn't* do this thing!

GRACE. But I have done it.

[*Grace goes, Katherine rushes to her, pulling her back from the door and they have a little tussle. Madame screams, moans, shakes, and seems to be fainting or collapsing in a hysterical fit, so Katherine relinquishes her hold on Grace and hastens to her mother's assistance. Ethel sits calmly through it all, nursing Fifi.*]

GRACE. Let go of me!

KATHERINE. Ethel, *do* something! Catch her, hold her, keep her from going. *Do* something!

GRACE. She can't.

ETHEL. But I never do anything. What is the use?

[*The honk of the automobile horn is heard again. Grace rushes out, Katherine supports her mother, who leans against her groaning, and Ethel sits unmoved in her chair.* CURTAIN.]

THE DRYAD

CHARACTERS

THE DRYAD.
THE PEDDLER.
JEN.

[*The scene is an open square in a city. An ancient market-house which originally occupied the space, was some half century ago transubstantiated into a huge bronze fountain and its setting. The square is all heavily paved in stone, three high stone steps up from the street level, extends the distance of the city block and is perhaps a half block wide. Solid fronts of buildings face it with their glass windows as if with spectacled eyes watching for what untoward gambols may occur on this possible stage. At one end of the square a great building stands, a clock in its high tower watching, too, from its eerie position. The fountain consists mainly of heavy female figures and heavy boys on the high central pedestal and on the massive stone rim, all pouring streams of water into the great basin from their massive mouths or hair or fingers. A few old sycamore trees, stunted, gnarled, and blackened — city trees — have been left, relics of a time earlier than the market-house even. It is the first of November and the branches of*

the sycamore trees wave and shiver and knock together in the vigor of a wind that leaps down the street or of one, particularly athletic, that springs from an alley opposite like a Merry Andrew. One tree has suffered more than the others at the hands of the elements and of men, but at the same time it is more beautiful in its picturesque gnarls and curves and twists, the manifestation of its strong striving to live. The cry of the wind is in it like a wild thing, seeming to be the tree's own cry, for it is just opposite the alley, and its branches beat madly. A workman comes up with two axes and a rope. He looks at the trees, gives the old one a hack with his ax, then throws down his tools and goes away. At once a cloudy figure slips out of the tree from behind. She is in filmy draperies — what would be called chiffon in a Fifth Avenue shop — not of green as might be supposed, but of shades of rose and gray. She is tall and young and slender and light with long graceful limbs and long fingers. Her brown hair is drawn in nearly a straight line across her forehead parallel to her level brows which gives her face almost a childish contour, and her eyes are blue. She stands quiet, shivering a little, lays her hand gently on the tree and when she speaks her voice has the rich resonance of a finely tempered golden bowl.]

DRYAD. Old tree!

[*The tree bends and creaks and quivers and she looks at it kindly up into its branches.*]

DRYAD. Old tree! I am thy soul. I come to thee and out of thee.
I heard thy call, thy prayer,
And from the uttermost forests I would come to thee,
But I was here within.
For long and long ago I was thy soul and wandered all about
Until that crafty Indian sunk his tomahawk into thy bark —
Dost thou remember, tree? —
And I was charmed and held in sleep within
Till now the charm is broken by that woodman's ax
And I may come to thee.
Old tree, thou art my chosen one,
For thy desire of life has been the keenest,
Thy struggle for joy the strongest,
I love thee best, old tree,
For the gay life in thee
That they could not suppress.
But, by Bacchus, it is a strange place
That thou hast called me to!
Where is the grass?
I know that it is drear November,
But down in the little valley
The grass is tangled and thick and not yet dried,
Not brave and brilliant as it is in spring,
Yet emerald still from its green veins, and soft.

But here — *where* is my grass? [*She demands passionately.*]
Bare, stark little stems of grace, straight risen from the sod
Which mingle their roots with thine —ah, *no!* [*She cries out like the cry of the wind.*]
I have forgot. This is not
That darling valley of love
Where on the hillside above
Rose bushes are green and red,
Gnome dusted and firefly fed,
Dear little Christmas trees of the Hallowe'en. [*She smiles at the thought of them and then, hearing something, she stands listening.*]
I hear — I hear the splashing of the brook.
It must be somewhere near, old tree,
This stony place must end somewhere in grass,
And there the ripples pass
Beneath. [*She looks about in the square that has now become lighted with electricity, of course, and then behind her she spies the fountain.*]
Was it this I heard? Is *this* my brook?
My poor, imprisoned, accurséd little brook?
And what are these?
Ah, naiads, perchance? [*She goes*

to the nearest massive bronze figure and stands respectfully near it.]

All hail! [*She waits expectantly a moment and then reiterates more politely still.*]

All hail! [*Receiving no response she looks bewildered, then amazed, cautiously watches the figure as an animal might, and at last goes to it and touches it furtively, withdrawing quickly.*]

Cold!

Some god has frozen her to stone.

The others, too? [*She glides about the fountain touching a number of the figures and saying after each experiment,* "Ah, cold!" Cold, too!" *She goes back to the tree.*]

Some god has cursed them all, old tree,

This is a deterrent place for thee and me to live.

The stone ground chills my feet, [*She stands first on one then on the other.*]

And I am frightened by those strange straight cliffs

With queer, square lanterns hanging on their sides. [*Pointing to the big buildings.*]

Are there caves within?

Are they the haunts

Of the Cyclops, of Fafner, or
Of Conor mac Nessa?
I am afraid, my tree!
I fear
Those balls of fire that hang in spaced mid-air.
There is no soft and jocund life,
A bane lies on the place,
It is cold and dead. [*She shivers, draws her filmy veils up close round her shoulders, and leans against the tree.*]
But I, old tree, and thee are one,
We live or die together. [*She stares out beyond the immediate lights and into the farther lights of the street where automobiles are passing, and the sidewalk where cold people hurry along.*]
But these? Surely these are creatures.
They move. They are men or gods,
Trojans, Fianna, or Greeks,
At least they are alive, praise be to Pan! [*She starts impulsively towards the street and right at the edge of the esplanade her attention is attracted by a young fellow who has just come up with a push-cart. He is a curly-haired, dreamy-eyed, plump, and prosperous young Greek. On his cart is an assortment of candy, pea-nuts, cracker-jack,*

chewing-gum, all-day suckers, and so on. Interest and delight take fire in the dryad's eyes and she approaches him.]

All hail!

[*The Peddler looks at her in absolute astonishment, drops his mouth wide open, rubs his eyes as if rubbing them awake, then gazes at her again. She smiles, bows in what a mythological person might mean for a courtesy, waves her arms, and throws him a kiss.*]

Joy be with thee!

PEDDLER. For the love o' God.

DRYAD. Which God?

PEDDLER. There ain't but one.

DRYAD [*throwing back her head with laughter*].
Oh, thou funny creature, is there not?
Art thou a Greek?

PEDDLER. Yes.

DRYAD. From Lesbos?

PEDDLER. My father was. He got me in New York.

DRYAD. I do not know New York.

PEDDLER. It's a great place.

DRYAD. You journey there by sea?

PEDDLER. Well, that depends. From here you take a train,
Or hoof it.

DRYAD. Oh! Thou art, perchance, a faun? Hast pointed ears?

PEDDLER. Well, I should worry.

[*She examines his ears carefully, pushing back his cap and lifting his curls. He grins delightedly at her touch.*]

DRYAD. Thou hast the ears of men.

PEDDLER. Well, sure. Why not?

DRYAD. Thy feet — are hoofs? [*She asks expectantly, with sweetly smiling eyes.*]

PEDDLER. I ain't no horse. What are you giving me?

[*She leans over and examines his feet, pulling up his ill-fitting and baggy trousers the better to see his shoes.*]

DRYAD. Thou hast not hoofs — and yet
Thy sandals are a strange unholy sight. [*She looks at them sadly, disgustedly.*]

PEDDLER [*lifting his foot with its disreputable shoe high into the air and waving it and laughing*]. Me? In winter? You bet you not.
I'd catch a cold and croak or if I didn't,
The boys would run me out.
Say, you, you can't fool me, this is a play.

[*They stand apart and each drops away several paces.*]

DRYAD [*solemnly*]. Thou art a man.

PEDDLER [*grinning*]. You bet I am. You are a movie girl.

DRYAD. Thou art a man and I a dryad but

I love thee. [*Her expression of almost unhappy earnestness dawns into a blessèd smile. The Peddler jumps and straightens himself up in gravity.*]

PEDDLER. I've got a girl.

DRYAD. I love thee.

PEDDLER. She's got a temper.

DRYAD. I love thee.

PEDDLER. She won't let you.

DRYAD. I love thee. [*As she speaks, she approaches him, smiling in her joy and admiration of him. He braces himself rather stiffly, looking at her with apprehension at first, then surlily gazing straight ahead.*]

PEDDLER. Go way!

[*She touches him, sliding her hand down his arm and about his shoulders, passing it about his neck, as it were sniffing him with her fingers, getting acquainted.*]

PEDDLER. Go way!

DRYAD [*very low*]. I love thee.

[*She feels his hair, his ears, eyes and eye-brows, nose, mouth, chin. Grace is all of each gesture and each gesture a caress. As she touches him here and there she speaks.*]

DRYAD. I love thy hair — I love thine ears — and eyes — and brows,
Thy mouth, thy chin.

[*When she had first touched his hair, he had repeated,* "Go way!" *but under the influence of her fingers his dogged resistance melts slowly until a satisfied grin spreads over his countenance and he turns his pleased eyes upon her.*]

PEDDLER. Gee, but you are some kid!

DRYAD. No, no, a dryad I. [*Shaking her head.*]

PEDDLER. By golly, you're a peach! [*Still more admiringly.*]

DRYAD. Fruit of the tree, nay, but the tree itself. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*]

PEDDLER. You give me funny talk, but, gee,
You ain't so slow!

DRYAD. Love is always quick, it is alive,
Only the dead are slow. Whatever is slow, is not love.

PEDDLER. I guess that's right. Jen, she was slow
A-making up her mind,
Jen — that's my girl — she had another guy
And she was going to see which saved the most
And which got drunk. I balled him out — but now —
Gee, but you're slick!

DRYAD. I love thee.

PEDDLER. You don't care if I drink?

DRYAD. I love thee, dear. The dewy drops of water
From Conla's well or the Fons Bandusium
Will bless thy lips the sweeter for my kisses.

PEDDLER. Aw, what's your guff? I ain't a-talking none
About just water. I like the suds,
But Jen's so damn particler.

DRYAD. I love thee.

PEDDLER. You're the stuff!

[*She looks at him enchantingly and he beams at her in glad satisfaction. He takes her in his arms and kisses her, when a girl rushes up the steps to them and screams at them.*]

JEN. *You!*

[*The Peddler lets go the Dryad and stands apart, half sheepish, half defiant.*]

PEDDLER. Hello, Jen.

JEN. Who's that?

PEDDLER. It's just a movie girl.

JEN. Well, you ain't no actor.

PEDDLER. No. Sometimes I wisht I was.

JEN. Look here, you stop your guff and come along with me.

PEDDLER. I can't leave the cart and can't move it just now,
There's trade a-coming sure,
It always comes this time o' evening,

I've got to stick right here.
You run along.
I'll see you later. See? S'long.

JEN. You bet I see. And I don't stir
From this here spot till you go mit,
Or send this girl sky-high —
You got your choice.

PEDDLER. Now, Jen, you see just how it is —
I can't go now — I got to scrape the dough.
You run along. Don't be so contrary.

JEN. Contrary? *Me?*

PEDDLER. Don't be so onery.

JEN. Me onery? You tell me who she is.

PEDDLER. I told you once — she's just a movie girl.

JEN [*to Dryad*]. What's your name?

DRYAD. A dryad I,
Spirit and god of trees.
I love this man.

[*She says it very simply and with a divine smile. Jen gives her a look of hatred, yells and makes for her. The dryad, rather surprised, stands still, looking at her with wide eyes, but the Peddler catches Jen and holds her back.*]

PEDDLER. No, you don't. You leave her be.

JEN [*to Peddler*]. Oh, you fool. You let me go.
I'll teach her what she is.
[*To Dryad.*] You — you ugly scarecrow, you!

Don't you see? He is my man,
He's going to marry me.

DRYAD. Marry? What is marry?

JEN. I reckon every girl knows that — even the movie folks.
He makes the coin for *me,* just *me* and no one else.
We'll rent a room and buy some furniture.
He's *mine.*

DRYAD. I love the man,
You love him not, you only love
What he has done for you.
You will not let him drink
Water from flowing springs.

JEN. Water? *Him?* [*She gives a loud laugh.*]

DRYAD. But I should love him still
Even if he drank strange vintages that drove him mad.

[*Jen with a sudden jerk escapes from the Peddler, and with a yell leaps upon the Dryad. The boy seizes her and after a sharp struggle, pulls her away. The dryad, amazed, gazes with her wide blue eyes at Jen and shakes back her beautiful disheveled hair.*]

DRYAD. Thou art a half-tamed mountain cat,
Thy softness in thy fur alone, thy culture in thy vesture.
I wear it not.
This man — he is my mate — thou

wouldst take from me,
Merely to do thee service.
But I hold him dear. I give myself to him
For that he loves me — not because he brings me food —
And that he'll never do.
[*To the boy.*] Oh, my love,
Thine eyes are like two blue-white iris flowers
In April, or like two stars,
Aldebaran and Leda in the month
When Scorpio trails the treetops of the south.

PEDDLER [*to Jen*]. Git back. [*He releases her and they both stand in amazement staring at the Dryad, who glows in the beauty of her love.*]

DRYAD. Thy hair is like the fair foamed rolling wave
That tosses lovingly upon
The opalescent sand at moon-dawn in the full.
Thy neck is strong and soft and warm as where
A lioness would desire to lay her young.
And when thy lips touch mine — ah, then,
'Tis beauty stark and swift as when a fire
Touches a pine cone.
I am the soul, I am the god of trees,

I am a part of beauty, of poetry, of life,
I am my share of all the loveliness
Of all the lovely world,
Of seas and hills and star-stilled summer nights.
I know all gods and trolls and leprechauns,
The fairy folk, the genii, the half-gods.
Apollo, Siegfried, and Angus Og have been my lovers.
Now to this man I bring delight,
And he has need of me
As lemon flowers need the joy of light.

[*The Peddler has become more and more fascinated by her appealing beauty and love, has stretched out his arms to her and now goes to her and takes her hands.*]

JEN. You dog-goned slut, you make a fool of him.

DRYAD. I only ask his love.

PEDDLER. And that's the whole damned thing.

JEN. Can you cook and wash for him?

DRYAD. I will bring him purple grapes and plums and blackberries,
And yellow honey gathered by the bees
From April's blossomed locust trees
And pink May clover fields.
I will lead him through the woods

To that still pool where grapevines hang
And he may swing far out and drop through soft cool air
To the cooler water underneath.

JEN. My gawd, she's nutty! [*She catches the Peddler by the arm and tries to pull him away. Then to the Dryad.*]
Say, you ain't no real movie girl?

DRYAD. A dryad I, a living part
Of all the living beauty of the world.

JEN. Don't you see? [*To the Peddler.*]
She's nutty, bughouse, crazy as a flea!
First thing you know a cop will pull her in,
Then where'll you be?

DRYAD. I will bring thee hazel nuts, but better still
I will bring thee rainbows and the dawn of stars.

JEN. You see she's crazy — she'll maybe murder you.
You ain't safe here — you come along with me.
[*The Peddler's bewilderment and final fear grow until he allows Jen to pull him away.*]

DRYAD. I love thee.

JEN. She'll kill you.

DRYAD. I'll give thee stars.

JEN. You come along. She ain't for such as us.

DRYAD. I'll bring thee little fauns to do thy bidding.

JEN. She's crazy as can be. They'll lock her in a cell.
Come, hurry up, let's get away from here
Before she gets you hooked and to the station-house.

[*As she speaks she draws the Peddler away, he looking back at the Dryad. They go down the steps and with his cart they hurry away. The Dryad is left staring wistfully after them. She turns back to the tree and lays her hand upon it and her forehead upon her hand.*]

DRYAD. Old tree, he did not see, he did not know, he did not understand.
He will work for her and think he is content,
But in his dreams he will follow, follow, follow,
Hunting the memory of me through the world.

[*Two men appear and the Dryad, seeing them, drops back. They do not notice her. They go to the tree and pick up the axes.*]

MAN. This is the tree that's got to come down.

OTHER MAN. It's the best one of the bunch.

MAN. That's the way.

They want to put an electric light right here.

A tree's got to make room for something practical.

[*They begin chopping and as they go on with their work, the Dryad looks frightened, pained, ill. Every blow to the tree is a stab to her till finally it totters, she wavers, too, and when it drops to the ground, she falls under one of the huge bronze female figures of the fountain and there she dies. The two men shoulder their axes and walk away.*

[CURTAIN]

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